

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN ALEXIS DE  
TOCQUEVILLE'S DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

Primrose Pratt Tishman, Doctor of Philosophy, 2004

Dissertation directed by: Professor Charles E. Butterworth  
Department of Government and Politics

This study explores the influence of Montesquieu, Rousseau and Pascal on Tocqueville's religious teaching to show that it has two components: (a) to provide for order in the disordered democratic state and (b) to satisfy a primordial human need for the eternal. The analysis follows Tocqueville's own method of contrast and analogy to show how the harmonious combination of the teaching of the enlightenment with religion in America on the one hand and their discordant linking in France on the other produced opposite consequences for liberty.

The study examines why Tocqueville insists that the mutual dependence of religion and liberty is more necessary in democracy than in aristocracy. Second, it demonstrates how Montesquieu's teaching helps Tocqueville to explain the American religious phenomenon, which combines an equal fervor for material well-being with systematic piety. Third, it explores how Tocqueville modifies Rousseau's teaching on opinion to promote religion as the appropriate source of moral authority in democracy. Fourth, it uncovers how Tocqueville combines selected elements of Rousseau's natural religion with Montesquieu's concept of virtue as enlightened interest and the moralistic language of Pascal to encourage religious habits that conform to the inclinations of the

democratic intellect and sentiment. Finally, it explores how Tocqueville's teaching can help thoughtful Americans deliberate about the moral issues that confront the U.S. today.

Tocqueville's teaching draws attention to the precarious position of liberty in egalitarian societies where the instinct for individual independence causes human beings to become amoral and apolitical. Equality induces them to become totally absorbed with the pursuit of material well-being and thus to direct all personal intellectual resources toward that goal, making common opinion the sole guide of reason in all other matters. Moreover, since laws usually reflect changing opinions Tocqueville affirms that religion -- the only fixed point around which human beings can orient themselves—must be used to sustain liberty by making it the foundation of public opinion.

THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE'S DEMOCRACY IN  
AMERICA

by

Primrose Pratt Tishman

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
2004

Advisory Committee:

Professor Charles E. Butterworth, Chair  
Professor Herman Belz  
Professor Wayne McIntosh  
Professor Karol Soltan  
Professor Ronald Terchek

©Copyright by

Primrose Pratt Tishman

2004

## DEDICATION

In memory of my beloved grandmother, Francine, whose unshakeable faith in the existence of God kindled in my soul a desire to love the good and the beautiful.

«Le Seigneur fit pour moi des merveilles,  
Saint est Son nom.»

French cantique (author unknown)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank my mother who inspired my love of learning. Doyle Cloud deserves special thanks for his faith in my intellectual ability, which gave me the courage to pursue a graduate education while fulfilling the responsibilities of a demanding full-time career in the air cargo transportation industry as a government affairs representative. I want to thank Charles Butterworth who not only taught me to love virtue by his exemplary conduct but also provided consistent mentoring, encouragement, and the generous use of his office, without all of which it would have been impossible for me to accomplish my goal. Finally, I want to thank the remaining members of my committee who helped me throughout the course of my graduate studies and provided useful advice on narrowing the scope of this work.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication .....	ii
Acknowledgments .....	iii
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
Statement of Purpose.....	1
How to Account for the Ambivalence in Tocqueville's Religious Doctrine.....	7
The Structure and Objective of <u>Democracy in America</u> .....	11
Chapter II     Is Religion Solely A Means to Liberty in Tocqueville's Political Philosophy or Is It Also an End in Itself?.....	34
How Tocqueville's Religious Sentiments Integrate the Elements of a Mixed Intellectual Tradition.....	36
How the Tension between Equality and Liberty in France Helped to Shape Tocqueville's Political Doctrine.....	49
How for Tocqueville Religion Helps to Maintain an Equilibrium between Equality and Liberty.....	53
How Tocqueville Defines the Connection He Makes between Religion and Liberty.....	60
Chapter III     Montesquieu's Influence on Tocqueville's Religious Teaching: How Tocqueville Came to Identify American Beliefs with a Modified Republican Virtue.....	87
How Montesquieu Illuminates for Tocqueville that the Common Features America Shares with England Contribute to its Democratic Success.....	102
How Tocqueville Came to Proclaim that Religion is the Preeminent Political Institution of Modern Democracy.....	121
Would Extending the Connection with England beyond Puritanism Have Hampered Tocqueville's Ability to Make a Strong Case for Disestablishment In France?.....	135
Chapter IV     How Tocqueville Adapts Rousseau's Teaching on Opinion to Promote Religion as the Appropriate Source of Authority in Democracies for Unifying Men and Leading them to Moral Virtue.....	159
Why Tocqueville Expands his Theoretical Framework beyond Montesquieu to Rousseau in the Second Volume of <u>Democracy in America</u> .....	164
How for Rousseau Reason Must Supplant Opinion if Man is to Achieve Moral Virtue in Society.....	176

How for Tocqueville Opinion Reflects the Principles of Political Regimes: Under Equality Opinion Can Carry the Authority of Reason to Bring Man To Moral Virtue.....	187
How Tocqueville's View regarding the Significant Contribution Woman Can Make to Democratic Order is Modeled on Rousseau's Teaching on the Subjection of Woman to Opinion.....	199
How Tocqueville Collapses Rousseau's Dichotomous Teaching on Opinion to Show that an Enlightened Equality Steers Public Opinion Closer to Moral Law.....	217
Chapter V     How Tocqueville Syncretizes the Teaching of the Enlightenment with the Moralistic Language of Pascal to Formulate a Religious Doctrine for Democracy.....	235
How Tocqueville's Condemnation of the Practices of the Catholic Church Recalls Rousseau's Reasons for Censuring Religion.....	237
How Tocqueville's Reverence for Christianity and Advocacy for Disestablishment Suggest that he does not Wish to Establish a Civil Religion for Democracy and that Rousseau's Natural Religion is a Closer Model for his Religious Doctrine.....	245
How Tocqueville Draws a Connection between Poetry and Beliefs to Promote a Religious Doctrine Conformable to the Ideas and Sentiments Equality Fosters.....	255
How Pascal's Understanding of the Human Condition Enables Tocqueville to Establish a Religious Doctrine for Democracy that Integrates the Principles of the Enlightenment with the Basic Tenets of Christian Morality.....	273
Chapter VI     Conclusion.....	328
How Tocqueville's Teaching Belies the Claim that Secularism is Desirable to Protect a Constitutional Right to Religious Freedom.....	339
A Possible Tocquevillian Response to the Controversial Issues of Abortion and Same-sex Marriage.....	345
Appendices.....	361
Appendix A.....	361
Appendix B.....	367
Appendix C.....	374
Bibliography.....	385



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Statement of Purpose**

This study argues that Alexis de Tocqueville's view of religion, as it is articulated in his theory of democracy, combines the teachings of Rousseau, Pascal, and Montesquieu, with all of whom by his own admission he spends some time each day. "There are three men with whom I spend a little time each day; they are Pascal, Montesquieu and Rousseau."<sup>1</sup> These daily *tête à têtes* with men of disparate views on religion are undertaken by Tocqueville evidently for the purpose of finding an intersection of ethical ideas capable of providing a moral anchor to man to meet the challenges he faces in modern democracy.<sup>2</sup>

This study also argues that Tocqueville's aristocratic and Catholic education plays a role in his penetrating understanding of the important place he insists religion ought to occupy in democratic society. However, it places greater emphasis on disentangling the intellectual influence of Pascal, Rousseau and Montesquieu on Tocqueville's religious teaching. The lessons Tocqueville learns from them about the human condition, human nature and the generative principles of political regimes respectively provide an essential backdrop for understanding the nuances in his teaching on religion and morality.

A review of the scholarly literature interpreting Tocqueville's works reveals that most scholars, including *inter alia*, Jean-Claude Lamberti, Marvin Zetterbaum, John Koritansky, Doris Goldstein and Sanford Kessler, have noted almost exclusively Rousseau's and/or Montesquieu's contributions to his scholarship. The only exceptions to this general rule are the analysis of Peter Augustine Lawler and that of Pierre Manent,

which emphasize his debt to Pascal. This tendency of scholars to focus on the influence of one or the other of these three thinkers, who have irreconcilable views on religion, leaves all previous interpretations of Tocqueville's teaching on religion wanting in completeness. It is noteworthy, however, that in the introduction to his translation of Democracy in America, Harvey Mansfield maintains like the present study that all three men influence Tocqueville's democratic theory. This study hopefully complements and improves upon Mansfield's cursory view of their contribution to the substance of Tocqueville's political thought.

In taking a comprehensive approach to the various elements that influence Tocqueville's religious teaching this study hopes to show that it is two-dimensional. In the first place it is concerned with establishing moral order in democratic society and in the second it appeals to a primordial human need for the eternal, which Tocqueville felt acutely enough to believe that it is a sentiment he shares with all human beings.

Tocqueville has the rare distinction of being among a few of his contemporaries to recognize that if the new age of equality opened unlimited horizons to the possibility of human perfectibility, it also produces a fertile ground for the darker side of human nature to flourish. He sees that equality does not necessarily lead to liberty and that in fact it has the potential to degenerate into a tyranny not yet seen in the history of the world, which if not checked will completely destroy human dignity. His observations of American democracy elucidate for him the possibility of amalgamating the diverse principles he extracts from his conversations with his three teachers. By combining empirical evidence with theory he is able to carve a coherent moral political philosophy

that conforms to the complexity of modern democratic life to lead democratic man to liberty.

Tocqueville's optimism about human possibilities far exceeds Rousseau's expectations for men in society while his temperate approach to religion falls short of Pascal's orthodoxy. Yet, strong echoes of Rousseau and Pascal permeate his teaching on religion and morality. In Tocqueville's moral doctrine Pascal's religion offers man a way in which to emancipate himself from the progressive degeneration wherein Rousseau sees him succumbing. This accommodation is no doubt the result of Tocqueville's efforts to liberate French society from the entrapments and vices of the bourgeois culture enslaving it during the monarchy of Louis-Philippe (1830-1848). Tocqueville's moral doctrine finds an intermediate position between Pascal's rigorous faith and Rousseau's pedagogical method to stem the social corruption that was engulfing the French nation.<sup>3</sup> This compromise explains the resulting ambivalence in Tocqueville's religious teaching, which also draws its orientation from Montesquieu to whom he is indebted for his conviction that religion can function as a political institution whose benefit is demonstrated by the American democratic experience. In sum, in viewing Tocqueville's religious doctrine through the prism of Pascal, Rousseau, and Montesquieu this study shows that it is an odd blend of two distinct mutually reinforcing components: it addresses a political need at the same time that it confirms the individual's longing for God, a longing whose fulfillment he believes is integral to the achievement of human liberty and human capacity for greatness.

Tocqueville borrows from Montesquieu and Rousseau the general philosophical concepts of the enlightenment. From them he learns the role of religion in providing man

an internalized sense of duty and the experience of extreme self-consciousness brought about by historical progress respectively. He learns from Pascal the core of the human condition and the tension between the “angel and the brute”<sup>4</sup> that resides in man’s soul, and this knowledge allows him to construct a political theory that seeks to restrain the beast unleashed by democracy’s “potentially unlimited horizon.”<sup>5</sup> This amalgam in Tocqueville’s political thought leaves the impression that it may be possible to reconcile the natural antagonism between philosophy and religion. In any case during his visit to America, Tocqueville notes the harmony that exists between religious beliefs and the application of the philosophical method of the enlightenment among the Americans and finds this to be a good thing.

In order to achieve its stated objective, this study follows Tocqueville’s own method of contrast and analogy to show how the “American syncretism of faith and reason and their French antagonism”<sup>6</sup> had opposite consequences for democratic liberty. The purpose of this comparison is threefold. First, it confirms the reciprocal relationship Tocqueville finds to exist among religion, morality and liberty. Second, it shows that the instability of the modern democratic state creates by necessity the dependence of liberty on religion. Such dependence was not as essential to the aristocratic social state wherein tradition and order prevailed. Third, it establishes that the ideals of the enlightenment, which are premised on the teachings of Christianity, cannot on their own provide man a substantive basis to meet the singular challenges of the modern democratic state; he also needs the support of religious beliefs to sustain him through them.

Tocqueville’s admiration for the ideas propagated by the enlightenment “at least, the correct, reasonable, applicable portion of those ideas, which, after all, are my own”<sup>7</sup>

did not prevent him from recognizing that their failure to fulfill the vast hopes they had inspired produced the “great malady”<sup>8</sup> of the nineteenth century. This malady which manifested itself in the immense spiritual lassitude of French society could only be counterpoised by a return to traditional beliefs. He found that religion provides the most powerful force to mitigate “the last century’s exaggerated and rather puerile confidence in the power that man exercises over himself and in that of peoples over their own destiny.”<sup>9</sup> His observations about modern democracy were illuminated by these convictions, which were inspired by lessons he learned from Pascal, Rousseau, and Montesquieu.

In sum, this study has two main objectives. First, it seeks to elucidate that Tocqueville’s keen interest in religion is prompted by his belief that there is an irreducible link between morality and liberty that makes religion more useful to egalitarian than other societies. Second, it seeks to demonstrate that his view of religion as it is articulated in his theory of democracy is filtered not only through the prism of his aristocratic lineage and the teachings of the enlightenment but also through Pascal’s understanding of the human condition less his Jansenist<sup>10</sup> ideas, which maintain that the city of man is vulnerable as long as it is not united with the City of God.

The present chapter seeks to situate the context in which Tocqueville’s religious doctrine evolved and to trace its development by analyzing the structure of Democracy in America. Chapter Two outlines the considerations and constitutive elements that underpin Tocqueville’s teaching on religion to sketch the connection that exists for him between religion and liberty. It contrasts his view of aristocratic and democratic liberty

to determine why his perspective assumes that liberty in aristocracy is less dependent on religion for its sustenance. This standpoint leaves open the question whether his Pascalian outlook of man's religious longings relates to man *qua* man or to man in a particular political regime, viz., democracy. Nevertheless, because Tocqueville's exhortation is directed at democracy and because it relies less on the orthodox teaching of Pascal than the alluring capacity of its language to engage man to think about his future, his influence will be examined along that of Rousseau and Montesquieu in chapter five.

Chapter Three focuses on Tocqueville's debt to Montesquieu by examining the status of religion in American democracy. Its objective is to determine whether it is religion *per se* that helps to maintain the equilibrium between equality and liberty in America or an amalgam of moral habits generated by America's Puritan tradition and practical reason.

Chapter Four explores the influence of opinions on beliefs to show that Tocqueville is particularly indebted to Rousseau, whose perspective of bourgeois society illuminates for him equality's potential to direct the human passions toward opposite ends. On the one hand it promotes compassion and on the other it fosters a subjection to materialism with deleterious effect for liberty. It shows that opinions in France, unlike those that govern American society, corrupted beliefs because French democracy originated in inequality and irreligion.

Chapter Five analyses Tocqueville's religious doctrine to show that it combines elements of Rousseau's natural religion with Montesquieu's concept of virtue as enlightened interest and the moralistic language of Pascal, a mixture that enables him to accommodate democratic man's intellectual habit and appeal at the same time to the

human longing for the otherworldly to counterbalance democratic materialism. This mixture is less incongruous than it appears initially when it is considered that the doctrines of Rousseau's natural religion are identical to Christianity's principles of morality while Pascal's apologia of Christianity was motivated to combat the libertinism of his time, an undertaking not unlike Tocqueville's quest to infuse the materialistic values of bourgeois society with a measure of religious morality.

In the second volume of Democracy in America Tocqueville appeals to the exercise of moral responsibility by man and woman that is the essence of Rousseau's teaching and the human capacity for greatness and dignity so integral to Pascal's teaching to argue for the benefits of religion on both a political and spiritual level under equality of conditions. Would the course of French democracy have been altered simply by a strong religious base in the absence of the social equality that Tocqueville affirms is the generative fact of American democracy? Chapter Five shows that despite the ambivalence that emerges from Tocqueville's religious teaching, it nonetheless establishes incontestably the dependence of democratic liberty on a strong moral foundation that religion alone provides. Finally, Chapter Six examines the way in which thoughtful Americans can use Tocqueville's teaching to deliberate about the moral issues that confront the U.S. today.

### **How to Account for the Ambivalence in Tocqueville's Religious Doctrine**

As previously noted Tocqueville's religious doctrine bears the imprint of his aristocratic lineage<sup>11</sup> and Catholic upbringing<sup>12</sup> as well as the influence of Rousseau, Pascal, and Montesquieu. His indebtedness to the latter is more palpable in his analysis

of the way in which the general principles of government exercise tremendous influence on shaping the direction of societies than it is in the area of religion.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, Tocqueville's published works and correspondence<sup>14</sup> both reveal a religious perspective that is filtered more or less through the prism of each of the foregoing elements. For example his religious teaching incorporates each of the following: a tacit assumption that religion is far more necessary for guiding man to virtue in democratic than in aristocratic society; a belief that Christianity, particularly Catholicism, is more suitable to democracy; and an adherence to the deism espoused by Rousseau to Pascal's understanding of the antagonistic dualism of human nature to Montesquieu's view that religion is necessary to societies.

Likewise, Tocqueville's teaching tends to suggest two separate alternatives for establishing morality in society. The first, which is based on the teachings of the enlightenment or more specifically the method taught by Montesquieu and Rousseau, affirms that proper education can lead to moral choice. This view is reinforced by Tocqueville's observations of American democracy where he notes that it is more the habit of religious practices than religious convictions *per se* that maintain moral order in society. The second, which borrows the language of Pascal, maintains that human beings need religious authority to provide them the moral standards on which their ability to make proper use of his liberty depends.<sup>15</sup> Tocqueville believes that this authority is all the more essential to democratic societies because democratic individualism enervates the human spirit. He teaches that a social community must be bound by common beliefs based on political and moral principles similar to the Americans' beliefs in republicanism



and human perfectibility respectively, which have their foundations in their Puritan religious heritage, to combat the nefarious consequences of democratic individualism.<sup>16</sup>

One way to account for Tocqueville's ambivalent religious perspective is to recognize that his religious teaching is implicitly bifurcated along class lines.

I confess that what I see here disposes me more than I ever was before to believing that what is called natural religion could suffice for the superior classes of society... By contrast, the people... will see in this natural religion only the absence of any belief in the afterlife and they will fall steadily into the single doctrine of self-interest.<sup>17</sup>

In his view, deism -- similar to that professed by Rousseau -- adequately provides a moral compass for the elite while fulfilling at least intellectually a human longing for knowledge of God's existence and the immortality of the soul. But, the "bridle of religion"<sup>18</sup> is needed to instill adequate moral conduct in the masses.

Class considerations notwithstanding, Tocqueville's underlying premise for establishing morality in democratic society relies on his unwavering conviction that man *qua* man derives great comfort in having a fixed idea about God and his own place in the order of creation. He draws this conviction from personal introspection, which taught him that knowledge about God provides man a temporary refuge from the restlessness and inevitable sufferings of human existence. For example, when Mary Motley, his future wife and the most important friend of his adult life, hesitated to consent to his marriage proposal in the summer of 1833, Tocqueville faced this painful disappointment by questioning whether any solace is to be found in the human condition. Unfortunately, the letter in which he expresses his anguish is not extant. We know by Louis de

Kergolay's response and attempt to console him that Tocqueville must have shared his deep sorrow with his life long and intimate friend.

I have thought myself so unhappy for such small things while you must be cruelly so at this time in such a profound matter. What an idea to think that there is no remedy in pain than pain itself and the exhaustion that it causes! I would like to see you have some sentiment that survives the state in which you find yourself; you speak to me of God; I have at time so regretted not to be a pious man, that this gave me then some spaces of time full of religion which is the only thing in the world which is strong enough to combat a violent sadness. Our age which advances provides a glimpse of the term of this life, something one does not think about at twenty. The frequent idea that we will die and will be reborn appeases alone the sadness of this life; these years that appear so cruel cease to be when contemplated in the context of the whole of existence.<sup>19</sup>

In the course of his life long correspondence with his numerous friends Tocqueville maintains views similar to those Kergolay so eloquently expresses in the foregoing letter, viz., that religion alone provides solace to man. This view underpins his thoughtful analysis of modern democratic societies which encapsulates the belief that social customs and traditions rooted in religion are particularly necessary to these societies to give man the moral resilience he needs to combat the bad inclinations of democratic equality. In fact, Tocqueville believes man's proclivity for spiritual nourishment to be so strong, particularly in democratic societies for reasons that will be discussed later, that he affirms man succumbs eventually to pantheism if he is deprived of

religion for too long. Therefore, the task of the statesman and philosopher, which Tocqueville assumes as his life long goal, is to harness and channel appropriately man's innate need of religion for the good of the democratic state.

### **The Structure and Objective of Democracy in America**

As noted previously Tocqueville's correspondence, which is invaluable insofar as it opens a window onto the religious convictions and moral principles that guided him, reveals also that his interest in America was spurred by his patriotic devotion to France. He wanted to understand the causes that pushed American democracy toward liberty and French democracy toward despotism. During his American journey he thought incessantly of France. Writing to Louis de Kergolay from New York on June 29, 1831 he states: "In the midst of all the theories with which I amuse my imagination here, the memory of France becomes a worm that consumes me. It manages to surprise me by day in the midst of our work, by night when I wake up."<sup>20</sup>

Tocqueville's constant preoccupation with France brought him to relate everything he observed in America to France. The result is that Democracy in America is replete with the contrast between America and France and aristocracy and democracy.

In my work on America, I almost always followed the second method [writing with a view to making people understand]. Although I very rarely spoke of France in my book, I did not write one page of it without thinking about her and without having her, so to speak, before my eyes. And what above all I have sought to put in relief in relation to the United States and to have well understood, was less the complete picture

of that foreign society than its contrasts and resemblances to our own. It is always either from opposition or from analogy with one that I set out to give a just and interesting idea of the other. I tell you that not as example to follow but as a good item to know. In my opinion, that continual reflection that I was making without saying so on France was one of the prime causes for the book's success.<sup>21</sup>

The first comparison allows him to present to his targeted audience, the French nation, the institutional characteristics of an orderly democracy as they exist in America. The second, for its part, permits him to show the superiority of the aristocratic state over the democratic regime insofar as the former represents the embodiment of stability and order and the latter its opposites. With these contrasts Tocqueville shows that with the disappearance of the stratified aristocratic order that favored human greatness, religion offers the sole possibility to man to avoid succumbing to the downward moral spiral to which democratic mediocrity leads.

Tocqueville published the first volume of Democracy in America in 1835, and his debt to Montesquieu is most obvious in this volume. It focuses mainly on the institutional structure of American democracy and the causes for its success. It concludes with a sober recognition that America cannot be imitated because the American situation is unique. Unlike France, America has no anti-democratic history and is geographically boundless. American society can enjoy the advantages of decentralization, local self-government and a respect for property rights as a result of these fortunate circumstances. Moreover, the jealousies of democratic people, which are the outgrowth of equality and the problem of most democracies, is not so prevalent in America because from its

inception America cultivated the expression of sub-political passion through its numerous associations and institutions. Thus, he leaves no doubt that he envisages a different kind of democracy for France whose circumstances and social conditions differ significantly from those of America. What America managed to achieve fortuitously, European statesmen will have to accomplish by art.

Tocqueville published the second volume of Democracy in America in 1840, nine years after his visit to America. In this volume, he sets for himself the task of defining the impact of the democratic regime on the character of its citizen. When he was contemplating writing this volume, he faced the impossibility of finding an empirical example of a pure democratic type. America was exceptional; England was a mixture of aristocracy and democracy; and France was revolutionary. Yet, all three were representative of a type of democracy. The result is that Tocqueville's democratic prototype falls somewhere between the extremes of the liberal spirit that characterizes American democracy and the revolutionary spirit that typifies French democracy. The second volume also enfold a censure of democratic society that implicates France insofar as it is the antithesis of the spirit of order, association and religion that Tocqueville asserts in the first volume are the elements that maintain American democracy. The influence of Pascal and Rousseau on his thought is most palpable in the second volume.

Throughout Democracy in America, Tocqueville maintains that democracy is unstable because laws are constantly changing and people are in perpetual movement from one end of the social stratum to the other as their fortune rise and fall whereas everything is static and fixed in aristocracy. He guides his analysis of democracy by

contrasting the evolution of political liberty among France, England and America. He admired England's system of representative government, which was evolving toward greater democracy while avoiding a revolutionary crisis thanks to the reforms of 1832<sup>22</sup> and America's ability to reconcile equality with the spirit of liberty and the spirit of religion. These comparisons allow him to elucidate the tension between liberty and equality and to demonstrate equality's propensity to nurture an incomparable taste for well-being, which engenders a sort of despotism even in the best circumstances-- albeit a soft one. Together the two volumes constitute a warning to France and the rest of Europe about the inevitability of democracy and the many possibilities it embraces so that they can make provisions to avert its worst manifestations.

In The Strange Liberalism of Alexis de Tocqueville, Roger Boesche argues that Tocqueville was faced with the great difficulty of writing about a subject that was still evolving in the nineteenth century and thus impossible to define accurately. The movement toward democracy or leveling tendency, which filled his soul with a "religious terror,"<sup>23</sup> appeared to Tocqueville to take many paths toward its end. As for his contemporaries, the meaning they attached to democracy changed its aspect according to their political sympathies and affiliations. Yet, Boesche argues that given that *democratie* was the key word in Democracy in America, it would seem that Tocqueville would have given it a precise meaning. His failure to do so made him the spokesman for numerous antagonistic groups who saw in him all at once the political characteristics of a democrat, a legitimist, a republican, a conservative, a liberal, a socialist and so on. Tocqueville responded to the different political features attributed to him with intelligent

arguments formulated to show why he could not have alternatively the aristocratic or democratic prejudices his audience found in his work.

However, this attempt by Tocqueville to demonstrate rationally the nature of his political instinct is contradicted by a more private assessment of his political standing, which is noted in a page of his diary entitled “My instinct, my opinions.” He writes:

Experience has taught me that most men, and surely myself, always come back in the end more or less to their fundamental instincts, and that they do well only those things that are compatible with their instincts. Let me therefore consider in all sincerity what my fundamental instincts and earnest principles are. For democratic institutions I have an intellectual preference, but I am by instinct an aristocrat, which is to say that I despise and fear the mob. I passionately love liberty, legality, respect for rights, but not democracy. That is my innermost feeling. I hate demagoguery, the disordered action of the masses, their violent and unenlightened intervention in political matters, the envious passions of the lower classes, irreligious inclinations. That is my innermost feeling. I belong neither to the revolutionary party, nor to the conservative party. But, nevertheless and after all, I am more attached to the second than to the first. For I differ from the second more by the means than by the end, while I differ from the first all at the same time by the means and the end. Liberty is the first of my passions. That is the plain truth.<sup>24</sup>

If Tocqueville’s aristocratic instincts inclined him to accept democracy reluctantly and as a matter of necessity, it did not prevent him from judging it fairly and with

unbelievable foresight. He explains his position to Kergolay in a letter in which he admits his recognition of the difficulty of founding a democratic government in France, adding that if he had the choice he would not attempt it. Yet, he maintains that he refuses to believe that God has been pushing three hundred thousand men for several centuries toward equality of conditions for the simple pleasure of leading them to the despotism of a Tiberius or a Claudius. While he ignores the reason for which God is pulling the world toward democracy, he expresses his position as follows.

Embarked on a ship I did not build, I am looking for a way to use it to reach the nearest port. Is it perilous to attempt such an enterprise? Show me something more perilous than to remain stationary and a path less dangerous to follow and I will admit that I am wrong. In our days, the high society appears to me to be in the situation of a man who has a wound in his arm; gangrene has set in and is spreading. It is no doubt very painful to have his arm amputated, the surgery could be fatal, but is it not better to risk living as an amputee than to die with one's two arms?<sup>25</sup>

These strong convictions compelled Tocqueville to approach his monumental work on democracy with great sincerity, honesty and an austere self-discipline that strove to repress as much as it is humanly possible any latent propensities that would be prejudicial to his self-imposed task to steer French democracy on a moral course. He exhorts France's statesman or legislator to make it his duty not only to direct and guide democracy on that course but also "to adapt its government to time and place; to modify it according to circumstances and men."<sup>26</sup> By the time Tocqueville published the second volume of Democracy in America, the "bourgeois"<sup>27</sup> monarchy of King Louis-Philippe



had been in power for ten years and Tocqueville himself had served in the Chamber of Deputies for one year<sup>28</sup> where he witnessed first-hand the vices of democratic equality. These realities no doubt made his pleas more urgent to French politicians to create a moral political environment in which man's soul can be elevated toward the sublime.

The second volume of Democracy in America is partly dedicated to the task of exhorting governments to put the dogma of the immortality of the soul in honor by acting "every day as if they believed in it; and [by] conforming scrupulously to religious morality in great affairs they can flatter themselves that they are teaching citizens to know it, love it and respect it in small ones."<sup>29</sup> This hortatory message reiterates the importance of keeping matters of religion and state separate. Tocqueville became convinced during his American sojourn about the benefits of disengaging religion from politics, and he advocated that position in the political arena. An apparent benefit of separating religion from politics is that in mixing its interests with those of this world, religion becomes almost as fragile as all the powers on earth. Religion retains its legitimate authority only when it is not bound to ephemeral powers. The Catholic Church had lost its empire over the souls of the French precisely because it was allied with the despotic power of the monarchy. While the American paradigm could not be entirely replicated in France, it nonetheless provides a powerful example, which could be modified to France's needs, since man's spiritual longings are the same everywhere. This conviction forms the backdrop for the principles that guide the religious foundation of Tocqueville's political philosophy.

---

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Louis de Kergolay, November 10, 1836, in Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes: correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Louis de Kergolay, ed. J. P. Mayer, texte établi par André Jardin, intro. Jean-Alain Lesourd, (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), tome XIII, 418. (Hereafter references to this work will appear as OC XIII). Also see Jean-Claude Lamberti, Tocqueville and the Two Democracies, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1989), 5.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B for my translation of an article published by Louis de Kergolay in April 1861 in *Le Correspondant*, a leading Paris newspaper, titled “*Etude littéraire sur Alexis de Tocqueville.*” This article as its title suggests, had a different objective than the present study insofar as its author limits himself to the influence these three men had on Tocqueville’s style as opposed to the substance of his ideas. Kergolay’s view is noteworthy inasmuch as among Tocqueville’s friends he was the one with whom Tocqueville was most intellectually aligned and whose advice Tocqueville sought consistently about his works on both substance as well as form, but more often on the latter. The following exchange of letters between the two friends provides evidence of Tocqueville’s reliance on Kergolay’s intellectual advice for his great works.

On January 6, 1838 Tocqueville writes to Kergolay that he needs to hold a discussion with him about the second volume of Democracy in America, which he was writing at the time. He wanted Kergolay to help him sort out the issue of ambition in a social state in which equality of conditions prevail. Tocqueville hypothesizes that in such a state ambition consists in the desire of people to change places, but great ambitions therein

---

diminish. Nevertheless, he muses that if equality puts great ambitions within the grasp of less people, might it not also permit it to everyone. Therefore, would it not follow that in the midst of this immense and perpetual agitation of ambition, it would be born necessarily by a fixed law a certain number of great ambitions?

In his answer, February 2, 1838, Kergolay examines Tocqueville's question by first establishing the meaning of democracy as it was understood in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He asserts that democracy is both a social and a political state. The first is the social movement toward equality and the second is still difficult to assess insofar as its essential and fundamental constitution is not yet a reality. Kergolay maintains that in the aristocratic state birth leads a man to great ambition; this condition is lacking to the democratic man who must first create a social position for himself before he can open for himself the door to a great ambition. Thus, he concludes that in general democracy develops small, mediocre ambitions but it is too soon to form a judgment about its potentiality to develop great ones.

The way in which Tocqueville settles this matter in the chapter titled "Why One Finds So Many Ambitious Men in the United States and So Few Great Ambitions" in volume 2 of Democracy in America closely parallels Kergolay's analysis.

Eighteen years later after his publication of L'Ancien régime Tocqueville has the following to say to Kergolay on his comments about his book. In a letter, July 29, 1856, he states: "thus your judgment on it [my book] has charmed me... I was also very happy by your telling me that my style has become more natural..."

Here is what he has to say in a subsequent letter, August 28, 1856: "Of all the correspondence which the publication of my book has occasioned between me and

---

friends and sometimes foreigners, correspondence which would already make a good volume, your letter is assuredly the most remarkable and the most useful. I do not adequately know how to beg you not to leave your work imperfect, but on the contrary to give it the most development that you could give it. You will do me the greatest service in acting this way. For, pushed as I am by circumstances toward the literary life, I have more reasons than ever to make myself as eminent as possible. I was surprised that you would have found in the first reading as many mistakes told as your first letter seemed to indicate... But this time your judgment aims much higher and reaches what one could call the substantial part of the style, that which escapes completely the vulgar judges and which all the talents of grammarians do not even hint at. The part of your letter that treats this matter has particularly struck me. I have always vaguely felt the existence of the problem you signal: this tendency to enclose all sorts of shades of ideas in the same sentence, such that while completing and laying out the idea, one enervates it and weakens the expression. But never had this flaw been signaled more clearly to me by another; and in fact it is one of those which all readers feel the inconvenience, but which almost none has had the time or the eagerness to discover the cause. It produces in most of them impressions but no distinct idea. Not only, do you specify it; but what is even more precious to me, you make it leap to my eyes with deletions which lighten the phrase without obscuring it. It is to do me a great service. The more conclusive examples you will furnish me, the more you will succeed in curing me; for it is not the perception and the conviction of the problem that you signal, which I lack, as I was telling you a minute ago. I know there is between my style and the style of great writers a certain obstacle that I must overcome to pass from the crowd into the ranks of these... What you are

---

doing [annotating the text] is important enough to me to wait for you to take the time necessary for your work. See OC XIII, 13, 17-18 & 308-309 respectively and 352-365 for Kergolay's article reproduced in Appendix A of this study.

<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to Peter Augustine Lawler whose analysis of Tocqueville's view of human liberty in The Restless Mind (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1993) helped me confirm my own thesis that Tocqueville's teaching on religion relies heavily on the lessons he learned from Pascal and Rousseau about the human condition.

<sup>4</sup> Tocqueville uses the language of Pascal to differentiate man from beast. The first is dependent upon his soul to elevate himself above the needs of the body whereas the latter is guided only by his instincts. For this reason it behooves man to make his soul great and strong so that its greatness can be put in the service of the body to tame its instincts. It is in this vein that he asserts "in men, the angel teaches the brute the art of satisfying itself." Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, trans. & ed. Harvey C. Mansfield & Delba Winthrop, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), vol. 2, pt. 2, chap. 16 (henceforth designated as II, 2, 16), 521. Also see Alexis de Tocqueville, De la démocratie en Amérique, Oeuvres II, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, ed. André Jardin with Jean-Claude Lamberti and James T. Schleifer, (Paris: editions Gallimard, 1992), II, 2,16, 661. (Henceforth references to this work will appear as DA for both the English translation and the French text with the page of the English translation appearing before that of the French text and the two separated by a slash, e.g., DA, II, 2, 16, 521/661). Pascal asserted that "man is neither angel or beast, and misfortune wants that he who wants to make the angel make [instead] the beast," Blaise Pascal, Pensées, Texte de

---

l'édition Brunschvicg, intro. & notes Ch.-M. des Granges, (Paris: editions Garnier Freres, 1964), no. 358, 164.

Peter Lawler takes a similar position by arguing that Tocqueville's "psychology borrows Pascal's definition of the incomprehensible mixture" of man's true state, which hovers between "certain knowledge" and "absolute ignorance," ergo, it is "neither angel nor brute." Peter Augustine Lawler, The Restless Mind, 80-81.

<sup>5</sup> This expression is borrowed from Matthew Mancini, Alexis de Tocqueville, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), 51.

<sup>6</sup> This expression is borrowed from Françoise Mélonio, Tocqueville and the French, trans. Beth G. Raps, (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 64.

<sup>7</sup> Letter to Gustave de Beaumont, April 24, 1856, in Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Gustave de Beaumont, ed. J. P. Mayer, texte établi et préfacé par André Jardin, (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), tome VIII, vol. 3, 395. (Hereafter references to this work will appear as OC VIII) See also Alexis de Tocqueville, Selected letters on Politics and Society, ed. Roger Boesche, trans. James Toupin and Roger Boesche, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 330.

<sup>8</sup> Letter to Arthur de Gobineau, December 20, 1853, in Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et d'Arthur de Gobineau, 6ème édition, ed. J. P. Mayer, texte établi et annoté par M. Degros, intro. J. J. Chevalier, (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), tome IX, 205. (Hereafter references to this work will appear as OC IX). See also Tocqueville, Selected letters, 303.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 205 and Selected Letters, 303.

---

<sup>10</sup> Jansenist was the name given to the followers of Cornelius Jansenius by their Jesuit enemies at the beginning of their quarrel in the middle of the seventeenth century over the interpretation of the canonical texts, in particular Paul's letter to the Romans: do we human creatures contribute in any way to our salvation and, if so, in what way? The Jesuits accused the Jansenists of being tainted with the horrors of the heresy found in Calvin's theory of predestination, which is not unlike that of Augustine, viz., that "human creatures after the Fall can perform no morally good act unaided; for every such act need the infusion of grace which is given to some and refused to others by the sheer wish of God, and not because some are more deserving of grace than others." Jansenius' followers refuted their detractors by calling themselves disciples of Augustine whose authority had been unshakable in Christianity. In fact, the Catholic Church codified his teaching in the Augustinian theology. "Augustine not only codified the orthodox doctrine of original sin and divine grace but to a large extent created it... By the sheer fact of being Adam's descendents, [man] contracted his actual sin, and not only the propensity to sin...thus suggesting that Adam was a kind of universal, and that we are not simply his offspring, but in moral terms, his replicas, that we participate actively in his guilt." Leszek Kolakowski, God Owes Us Nothing, A Brief Remark on Pascal's Religion and on the Spirit of Jansenism, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 13 and 32.

It is unlikely that Tocqueville accepted the Augustinian-Jansenist orthodox teaching on grace since it denies man the free-will that allows him to achieve indefinite perfectibility. In fact, it is probably such Catholic dogma that caused him to question his faith once he

---

discovered the teachings of the enlightenment. The affinity between Tocqueville and Pascal lies in their self-imposed duty to combat irreligion in their respective time.

Kolakowski states that “Pascal was responding to the Cartesian-libertine mentality that robbed the world of purpose, meaning, and life. He defended Christianity from a position which, he knew, could not be reinforced by appeals to scholastic rationalism (he would, perhaps, reluctantly have accepted Heidegger’s belief that philosophy is by nature atheistic, that is alien to the problem of God, at least in the sense that it is helpless in the search for the real God who matters). A scientist, he saw the world, like his contemporaries and unlike Renaissance naturalists, as a machine or as an indifferent dead mass, and he opposed the unshakable faith of the elect to the religious indifference of the enlightened and to the seeming bravery of God-killers. Behind the veil of the optimistic worship of Reason he disclosed the unacknowledged fear and self-deception of people who avoid the real issues of life. He assimilated the new science and greatly contributed to it, but he fought against the Enlightenment of his age, which, in his eyes, produced despair in disguise.” Ibid., 188.

These sentiments certainly echo Tocqueville’s own anxiety about irreligion and a general tendency in France to espouse materialistic doctrines. While Tocqueville is certainly not anti-enlightenment, he, nonetheless, condemns the doctrines of the French *philosophes* of the eighteenth century for spreading universal discredit of all religious beliefs. Alexis de Tocqueville, The Old Regime and the Revolution, ed. with an introduction and critical apparatus by François Furet and Françoise Mélonio, trans. Alan S. Kahan, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), I, 2, 96. Also see Alexis de Tocqueville, L’Ancien régime et la révolution, Oeuvres complètes, ed. J. P. Mayer, intro.



---

Georges Lefèbvre, (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), I, 2, 83-84. (Henceforth all references to this work will appear as OR for the English translation and AR for the French text as follows OR/AR with the pages to the corresponding texts separated also by a slash, e.g., OR/AR, I, 2, 96/83-84).

<sup>11</sup> Publicly Tocqueville disavowed any preference for aristocracy or democracy. In a letter, March 22, 1837, to his friend and English translator of his published works, Henry Reeve, he states: “it delights me to see the different features that are given to me according to the political passions of the person who cites me. ..To the present day, I have not yet found one of them that completely looked like me. ..They alternately give me democratic or aristocratic prejudices; I perhaps would have had one set of prejudices or the other, if I had been born in another century and in another country. But the chance of birth has made me very comfortable defending both...Aristocracy was already dead when I started life and democracy did not yet exist, so my instinct could lead me blindly neither toward one nor toward the other...Belonging to the old aristocracy of my homeland, I had neither hatred nor natural jealousy against the aristocracy, and that aristocracy being destroyed, I did not have any natural love for it either, since one only attaches oneself to what is living. I was near enough to it to know it well, far enough away to judge it without passion. I would say as much about the democratic element.” Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes, correspondance anglaise, correspondance d’Alexis de Tocqueville avec Henry Reeve et John Stuart Mill, 5ème édition, ed. J. P. Mayer, texte établi et annoté par J. P. Mayer et Gustave Rudier, intro. J. P. Mayer, (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), tome VI, 37-38. (Hereafter references to this work will be shown as OC VI) See also Tocqueville, Selected letters, 115-116

---

<sup>12</sup> Tocqueville's Catholic beliefs were influenced by the Jansenist doctrines professed by his tutor, the Abbé Lesueur. Tocqueville's beloved Bébé, his nickname for his tutor, served his family in this capacity for fifty-one years. He had been chosen in 1780 by Tocqueville's pious paternal grandmother, Catherine de Damas, to be the preceptor of Tocqueville's father, Hervé and subsequently that of Tocqueville and his brothers. Antoine Rédier asserts that Tocqueville, whose most aristocratic feature was a noble soul, owes his moral uprightness to the advice and example of the pious Abbé Lesueur. Antoine Rédier, Comme disait Monsieur de Tocqueville, (Paris: Perrin, 1925), 8 and 35-36.

Nevertheless, his early religious indoctrination was shaken at the age of sixteen when he discovered, *inter alia*, Descartes, Rousseau, and Voltaire in his father's library. This discovery caused him to be racked with doubt throughout his life except perhaps in his final days. This experience prompted him to write to his beloved tutor, "I believe, but I can no longer practice." Tocqueville's ensuing struggle to regain his faith was a major catalyst in his life long ambition to reconcile the humanistic aspirations embodied in the philosophy of the eighteenth century with Christianity and the "spirit of religion" with the "spirit of liberty." Letter to Abbé Lesueur, September 8, 1824, in Tocqueville and the Two Democracies, 4. See also George Wilson Pierson, Tocqueville in America abridged by Dudley C. Lunt from Tocqueville and Beaumont in America, (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959), 7-8. This study has to rely on secondary sources here since this letter is not included in the collection of letters to Abbé Lesueur that appear in the J. P. Mayer édition of the Oeuvres complètes, correspondance familiale. It is probably part of a private collection, which the *Commission de*

---

*publication des oeuvres de Tocqueville* is compiling for a future volume of the *Oeuvres complètes* to be published under the title “*Correspondence à divers.*” Nevertheless, this study is comfortable with the assertion attributed to Tocqueville herein since he clearly discussed the issue of his profoundly shaken faith with his tutor as shown elsewhere in this study.

<sup>13</sup> Tocqueville’s voluminous correspondence reveals that he was assiduously studying Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Pascal at the end of 1836 when he was preparing to begin work on the second volume of Democracy in America. However, it is very likely that he consulted Montesquieu in the preparation of the first volume which emphasizes the influence of mores on society. At any rate, we know that in the summer of 1832 Montesquieu was the subject of discussion between Louis de Kergolay and Tocqueville. The two friends always discussed with each other their views about the authors they were reading. Unfortunately, we have only the letter in which Kergolay informs Tocqueville he is reading De l’esprit des lois but we do not have the latter’s response to this letter. To the extent that religion is one of the elements that is included in Montesquieu and Tocqueville’s concept of mores, one could say that Montesquieu has an indirect influence on the important place Tocqueville assigns to religion in his teaching. Moreover, it is not unlikely that Tocqueville consulted the works of all three philosophers a short time before the publication of the first volume of that work. In his comments to Tocqueville’s draft of the first volume, Kergolay urges him to read Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Pascal to improve his general style adding that they are indeed the teachers most suitable to him. Letter to Tocqueville, August 5, 1832, and Letter to Tocqueville not dated but estimated

---

to have been written end of October 1834, a few months before the January 1835 publication of Democracy in America respectively in OC XIII, 366.

Peter Augustine Lawler emphasizes Tocqueville's debt to Pascal and Rousseau but omits to mention the influence of Montesquieu. He explains this omission in a footnote in which he relies on Wilhelm Hennis's scholarship to show that Tocqueville's debt to Montesquieu was superficial. In The Restless Mind he states Hennis argues that Tocqueville partly rejected the "individualistic liberalism" championed by Montesquieu because he recognized the trend toward "atomistic liberty" would lead to the "miserable degradation of the increasingly disordered soul" of democratic man.

Tocqueville's thoughtful analysis of democratic society puts great store on religion to combat the pernicious effect of "individualistic liberalism" on liberty by emphasizing Christianity's exhortation to the individual about his moral responsibility not only to himself but also to God and his community. It is therefore not unreasonable to suggest that Tocqueville would refrain from highlighting in a discussion on religion any merit he may have assigned to Montesquieu's liberalism, which was produced by the enlightenment in an era far different from the democratic one of concern to him.

However, it is important to note that Lawler finds it nonetheless necessary to point out that Tocqueville's rejection of "individualistic liberalism" does not completely liberate him from his debt to Montesquieu. Lawler rightly insists that Tocqueville owes something to Montesquieu in his partisanship of individuality in opposition to the modern civic republicanism inspired by Rousseau, which placed greater value on equality than on liberty. Wilhelm Hennis, In Search of the "New Science of Politics": Interpreting

---

Tocqueville's Democracy in America, ed. Ken Masugi (Savage, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1991), 39-40, 54-58 quoted in The Restless Mind, 184.

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix C for a synopsis of Tocqueville's correspondence.

<sup>15</sup> In this sense liberty has both a private and political meaning. The first, which is the liberty to guard oneself from sin, is a precondition for the second.

Referring to the reign of Edward VI who established a modified Protestantism when he succeeded the despotic reign of his father, Tocqueville asserts the following. "His reign presents a pleasant spectacle that shows the need men have of authority in religious matters and to what extent they start to err when they lose this base of certainty to call only to their reason." Undoubtedly, Tocqueville wants to imply here that the English of that era had not yet grown accustomed enough to liberty to make full usage of their capacity to exercise complete moral independence. Letter to Beaumont, October 5, 1828, in OC VIII, vol. 1, 70.

<sup>16</sup> Letter to Kergolay, June 29, 1831, in OC XIII, 225-227.

It is likely that the observations Tocqueville made during his sojourn in America prompted him to rethink and modify the primacy he accorded religion to rule entirely in the moral world a few years earlier in his letter to Beaumont cited above. He seems to have found a middle ground in which he admits enlightenment can fulfill at least partly the role religion plays in shaping morality in society. This view is expressed in a letter in which he outlines his assessment of Machiavelli's portrait of Italian society in the middle ages--one in which real virtue was almost non-existent while extraordinary vices reign and skepticism ruled in the upper classes and superstitions wreaked havoc in the lower. "I know what was true of the Italian of the XVI century is not necessarily true of the

---

other nations of Europe. I see nevertheless that the eras that immediately preceded the Reformation have been everywhere centuries of great corruption. Ignorance and religion misunderstood in the masses; doubt and incredulity in the superior classes. In a word the wrongs of barbarism and of the great civilization united together. This brings me more and more to think that once religious beliefs are shaken in a nation, there must not be any hesitation, it must at any price be pushed toward enlightenment.” It is noteworthy that Tocqueville reviles Machiavelli and condemns his teaching, which is antithetical to his. “The core of his thought is that all actions are indifferent in themselves and that they must be judged by the cleverness they show and the success that follows them. For him the world is a great arena in which God is absent, where conscience has nothing to do and where each concludes his business the best he can.” Tocqueville’s view of the immorality that governs French politics in his own time is underscored by his assertion that “Machiavelli is the grandfather of M. Thiers.” Throughout his letters and in his *Souvenirs*, Tocqueville’s most scathing comments about human baseness include Adolphe Thiers, his colleague during his tenure in the Chamber of Deputies. He expresses similar views to Royer-Collard about his reading of Machiavelli’s complete disregard for morality and virtue. “In sum, Machiavelli’s *Prince* works so skillfully and laboriously to become a great criminal, that I think that he would have been far less difficult for him to manage by being simply honest.” Letter to Kergolay, August 5, 1836, in *OC* XIII, 390 and letter to Royer-Collard, August 25, 1836, in Alexis de Tocqueville, *Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d’Alexis de Tocqueville et de Pierre-Paul Royer-Collard, correspondance d’Alexis de Tocqueville et de Jean-Jacques Ampère*, ed. J. P.

---

Mayer, texte établi, annoté et prefacé par André Jardin, (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), tome XI, 19-20. (Hereafter references to this work will appear as OC XI).

<sup>17</sup> Letter to Louis de Kergolay, June 29, 1831, in OC XIII, 231. See also Tocqueville, Selected letters, 50.

<sup>18</sup> Selected letters, 52.

<sup>19</sup> Letter from Kergolay, August 18, 1833, in OC XIII, 334.

Mary Motley probably did not want to formalize her union with Tocqueville because she did not want to confront the sea of disapproval with which it would be met by Toqueville's family and friends, who objected to the marriage. In their view, her English commoner background put a great social distance between herself and Tocqueville's aristocratic milieu. Kergolay was first among the friends who objected to the marriage.

<sup>20</sup> OC XIII, 235. See also Tocqueville, Selected Letters, 58.

<sup>21</sup> Letter to Louis de Kergolay, October 18, 1847, in OC XIII, 208 and in Selected Letters, 191.

<sup>22</sup> The Reform Bill of 1830-32 facilitated England's transition to democracy by adapting the system of Parliamentary Cabinet government to the new social facts created by the Industrial Revolution. This involved the admission first of the middle and then working class as partners in the control of the political machine. This adjustment was seen as a means to avoid the breakdown of the parliamentary system and a war of the classes.

George Macaulay Trevelyan, A Shortened History of England, (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1942), 461.

<sup>23</sup> DA, 6/7.

<sup>24</sup> Comme disait Monsieur de Tocqueville, 46-48.

---

<sup>25</sup> Letter to Kergolay not dated but estimated to have been written at the end of January 1835 around the time of the publication of the first volume of Democracy in America in OC XIII, 373-374.

<sup>26</sup> DA, 7/8.

<sup>27</sup> The caricaturists of the 1830's represented Louis-Philippe as a bourgeois and parsimonious fellow. His ascent to the throne flattered the bourgeoisie, which recognized itself in this "King-Citizen." He facilitated the consolidation of bourgeois power under the banner of liberalism. While his brand of liberalism was founded on the principle of respect for individual liberties, it rested in effect on the political superiority of the elite, which favored the bourgeois interests. Georges Duby, Histoire de la France, (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1970), 383 & 458.

Louis-Philippe's liberalism embraced the anticlerical and bonapartist elements France inherited from the Revolution. It was very different from Tocqueville's "new liberalism," which is suited to democratic times insofar as it focuses on reconciling the spirit of liberty and the spirit of religion and is opposed to the revolutionary spirit. Tocqueville accepted without enthusiasm the July monarchy because it was a better alternative to the republic and because it appeared to him to be France's last chance for instituting a constitutional monarchy. His hopes were soon dashed since Louis-Philippe's victory over the republican rioting did not lead to liberalism's rebirth but to the personal power of the king, the crisis of the parliamentary regime and the erosion of public spirit. Jean-Claude Lamberti, "Notice" in De la démocratie en Amérique, 1047.

<sup>28</sup> Tocqueville was elected deputy of Valognes on March 2, 1839 and he published the second volume in April of the following year.



---

<sup>29</sup> DA, II, 2, 15, 521/660.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **IS RELIGION SOLELY A MEANS TO LIBERTY IN TOCQUEVILLE'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OR IS IT ALSO AN END IN ITSELF?**

This chapter aims to demonstrate the mutual dependence of religion and liberty in Tocqueville's thought. Tocqueville's religious teaching is overshadowed by his own admission that he struggled most of his life with metaphysical doubt. Yet, despite his avowed religious conflict, his published works, correspondence and travel notes show palpable evidence of a man whose thoughts and actions always assume the existence of a Creator to whom he and all men are duty bound to live a moral life according to the teachings of the Scriptures. In fact, Tocqueville's ideas and life long exemplary conduct show that he believes human liberty and dignity, the things he loves most passionately, are possible only when man submits his will to divine law and authority.

We know from Antoine R  dier, who was the first scholar to have access to the Tocqueville archives and who therefore had the opportunity to examine a wealth of private papers that had not been edited for publication<sup>1</sup> that Tocqueville lived and thought on the margin of religion. Mr. R  dier asserts that "if he [Tocqueville] broke with the faith of his fathers, he never left the surroundings, not even the shadow of this Church, where the men and women of his breeding prayed for centuries."<sup>2</sup> Mr. R  dier's research allowed J. P. Mayer, who compiled the unedited correspondence of Tocqueville, to conclude that his religious beliefs during the time he was assailed with doubt, i.e., from adolescence until shortly before his death, was one of Christian deism.<sup>3</sup> Tocqueville's biographer, Andr   Jardin, seems to agree with these two assessments of his religious beliefs. He disagrees with the commentators who claimed after Tocqueville's death that his decision to take the last rites points to his deathbed conversion to "intellectual

Catholicism,” since to take this sacrament he would have had to have met the necessary precondition of affirming his belief in Catholic doctrines or otherwise risked committing sacrilege. Nevertheless, Mr. Jardin’s comments on this subject are inconclusive as evidenced by his sober final remark: “[t]here are intimate reaches of the spirit that compel one to silence.”<sup>4</sup>

A study that seeks to understand the role of religion in Tocqueville’s political philosophy like the present one has a profound interest in first settling as best as possible the issue of Tocqueville’s religious beliefs; for his noble character or *grandeur d’âme* presupposes a close connection between his beliefs and teaching.<sup>5</sup> What does Tocqueville’s teaching tell us about what it means to be religious? Does being religious for him depend solely on one’s acceptance of Christian doctrines or can some men use their reason to answer abstract or theoretical questions about God that allow them to lead moral lives without adhering to any formal religious beliefs? To what extent does Tocqueville’s aristocratic view of his targeted audience, i.e., democratic society, bear on what he teaches about religion?

One thing is clear: Tocqueville ranks Christianity above all other religions for having amalgamated the important moral principles of justice and equality among men; for creating a human society outside of all national societies thereby making all men brothers; and for raising the standard of morality by placing the sanction of moral laws, which were heretofore in this world, in the afterlife. He credits these Christian moral principles for the development of Western Civilization and the ascendance of democracy, a less elevated but more just political system than aristocracy.<sup>6</sup> It is also clear to him that

the great mass of men are unable to use their reason to arrive at abstract truths and thus need dogmatic faith to believe in God and a moral order.<sup>7</sup>

Notwithstanding these definitive answers, Tocqueville's religious teaching remains nebulous unless it is examined through lenses that allow one to determine whether religion is for him an end in itself or a means to his beloved liberty or both. This approach is an important step toward unraveling the Tocquevillean paradox on religion, which leaves his teaching on this subject open to varied interpretations. On one hand he claims unbelief but on the other he admits the existence of God with utmost sincerity and conviction<sup>8</sup> and exhorts democratic societies to submit to the authority of religion. The goal of this chapter, therefore, is to probe the irreducible link between religion and liberty found in Tocqueville's political philosophy, which distinguishes between two kinds of liberty, both of which are subject to moral law. The first, private liberty consists in guarding oneself free from the fetters of sins by obeying moral law and the second, public liberty is an extension of the first carried through active participation in the public sphere.<sup>9</sup>

### **How Tocqueville's Religious Sentiments Integrate the Elements of a Mixed Intellectual Tradition**

In his analysis of the "Influence of Democracy on the Intellectual Movement in the United States" in part one of the second volume of Democracy in America, Tocqueville affirms that the great utility of religion is "more visible among people where conditions are equal than among all others...[because] equality, which introduces great goods into the world, nevertheless suggests to men very dangerous instincts... it tends to isolate men from one another and to bring one to be wholly occupied with himself alone.

It opens their soul excessively to the love of material enjoyments”<sup>10</sup> insofar as an apparent immense and easy course seems open to them to fulfill their ambitions when the prerogatives of birth and fortune are destroyed. Yet, because this course is equally opened to all it absorbs democratic man in petty passions as he engages in the fierce competition for limited resources in the public sphere. “The greatest advantage of religions is to inspire wholly contrary instincts [as] there is no religion that does not place man’s desires beyond and above earthly goods.”<sup>11</sup>

Religion then is particularly useful to democratic societies because it serves to constrain the flow of petty passions that equality engenders. It fulfills this function by appealing to man’s innate need for belief in the existence of God and the immortality of the soul to provide him a sense of order in an otherwise chaotic world. Because the rewards for these immaterial longings carry with them moral obligations, religious beliefs impose restraints on man’s baser instincts. In short, there is no religion, “even the most false and dangerous,”<sup>12</sup> that does not draw man from time to time away from contemplation of himself. These assumptions lead Tocqueville to conclude that under the empire of religion the proper exercise of self-government, liberty and an orderly social democracy are not irreconcilable as long as religions discreetly keep within the bounds that are proper to them.

Some scholars<sup>13</sup> interested in Tocqueville argue that he sought to replace traditional Christianity with a freedom-oriented civil religion<sup>14</sup> while others<sup>15</sup> believe that his life long endeavor to prove the mutual dependence of liberty and faith caused him to view religion solely from a political point of view. These arguments take for granted Rousseau’s and Montesquieu’s influence on his thought, which focuses on the political

utility of religion, while discounting totally that of Pascal, which centers on man's innate longing for the divine in his life and his abject restlessness in its absence. Yet these not so unreasonable conclusions, given Tocqueville's political interest in religion, take nonetheless a far too simplistic view of Tocqueville's painful ambivalence about his religious beliefs.<sup>16</sup> It is more to the point to say that the position he advances on religion in his published works tends to a great extent to be concerned primarily with the good it brings to the body politic while less prominently it suggests also religion's ability to bring solace to man.

The tendency to overlook the great length to which Tocqueville goes to explain man's need of religion to answer persistent questions about God, moral choice and the meaning of life probably stems from his own suggestion that he follows the tradition of Montesquieu insofar as he writes about religion not as a theologian but as "one who writes about politics."<sup>17</sup> Indeed, one could easily confine his teaching to this heritage if one takes in isolation his comment to his friend Charles Stoffels: "I am neither a philosopher nor a theologian, but a statesman who believes in the necessity of religious beliefs and who desires passionately to conserve what is left of them in this country and to foster them, if the thing is possible."<sup>18</sup>

Yet this assertion should not be considered a conclusive account of Tocqueville's religious convictions. He laments his crisis of faith all his life and describes his experience with doubt as "the most insupportable of all evils of this world." He considers the universal doubt that afflicted him as "a sad and frightening illness," and thinks that happiness is the lot of "those who have never known this illness, or who no longer know it!"<sup>19</sup> He ranks illnesses, death and doubt as life's worse evils. Doubt is as much a

debilitating illness to Tocqueville as the frequent severe stomach ailments that caused him to be inclined to a black melancholia. Nevertheless, he accommodates himself to live courageously with these illnesses. Here is what he has to say about living with doubt.

Life is neither a pleasure nor a sorrow; it is a serious affair with which we are charged, and toward which our duty is to acquit ourselves as well as possible. I assure you, my dear friend, that whenever I have managed to view it in this way, I have drawn great internal strength from this thought...

When I first began to reflect, I believed that the world was full of demonstrable truths; that it was only a matter of looking carefully to see them. But when I sought to apply myself to considering the objects, I perceived nothing but inextricable doubts. I cannot express to you, my dear Charles, the horrible state into which this discovery threw me. That was the unhappiest time of my life; I can only compare myself to a man who, seized by dizziness, believes that he feels the floor tremble under his feet and sees the walls that surround him move; even today, I recall that period with a feeling of horror. I can say that then I fought with doubt hand to hand, and that it is rare to do so with more despair. Well! I ultimately convinced myself that the search for absolute, demonstrable truth, like the quest for perfect happiness, was an effort directed toward the impossible. It is not that there are not some truths that merit man's complete conviction, but be sure they are very few in number. Concerning the immense majority of points that it is important for us to know, we have

only probabilities, almoses. To despair of its being so is to despair of being a man, for that is one of the most inflexible laws of our nature. Does it follow that man must never act because he is never sure of anything? Certainly that is not my doctrine...

But, whatever one does, you tell me, the doubt on which one risks oneself is always a painful state. Undoubtedly: I consider this doubt to be one of the greatest miseries of our nature; I place it immediately after illnesses and death, but precisely because I hold this opinion of it, I cannot imagine that so many men inflict it on themselves gratuitously and uselessly. That is why I have always considered metaphysics and all the purely theoretical sciences, which serve for nothing in the reality of life, to be voluntary torment that man has consented to inflict on himself...<sup>20</sup>

The tenor of the foregoing letter evinces the extent to which Tocqueville syncretizes Pascal and Rousseau's teaching to arrive at the penetrating understanding of human nature, its limitations and moral obligations that permeates his thought. It is Pascalian in its essence inasmuch as it testifies to the misery of man without God; and Rousseauan insofar as it prescribes public virtue, which for Tocqueville is foremost among man's duties, as a moral antidote to human passions. Tocqueville's conviction about the seriousness of life and one's duty toward it permeates his letters to his closest friends until the time of his death on April 16, 1859.

The informed reader familiar with Tocqueville's correspondence can surmise nonetheless the preponderance of his debt to Rousseau by considering the linkage he makes between the moral and political world, which he affirms are for him indivisible, in



a subsequent letter addressed to another correspondent sixteen months later. Whereas the letter above is concerned with metaphysical doubt, this succeeding letter addresses another form of pyrrhonism, which Tocqueville finds equally pernicious as demonstrated by the metaphorical term he uses to describe it: “political atheism.”<sup>21</sup>

Tocqueville not only affirms consistently the intimate connection between moral and political obligations but he also believes that the exercise of each demands courage or manliness, which he insists was the mark of honor in feudal societies and ancient Rome where it became synonymous with “*virtu*,” the Latin word for virtue.<sup>22</sup> However, he wants to modify this aristocratic or republican notion of virtue, which was heretofore associated with military courage and thus was attainable only by the social elite, by infusing it with a modern ethical standard that makes participation in human affairs the moral responsibility of not just a few men but that of all men. The courage appropriate to modern democratic man is one that pushes him to exercise moral choice in the practical affairs that absorb him daily under a system of equality.

Democracy requires a different moral standard than aristocratic society inasmuch as it lacks the latter’s superior class whose privileged social standing invested it with the duty to preserve liberty and guide opinions. All being equal, none has the leisure to meditate on abstractions beyond the competence of human reason. To engage in metaphysics is a useless activity that only serves to condemn oneself to apathy, particularly in the fluid democratic environment, a choice for Tocqueville that has no moral or practical political value. Rather, Tocqueville’s doctrine reveals a moral choice; political participation not only offers the means to acquit oneself of a moral duty to

oneself and one's fellowmen but it also provides an outlet through which to escape what Pascal defines as the existential restlessness that is the bane of human life.

On a more spiritual level, the letter points to an accommodation with doubt that nonetheless admits to a belief in certain unproven but eternal truths. One of the unproven truths to which Tocqueville refers here is undeniably the belief in the existence of God and that of the soul as a separate entity from the body. We know this because in Democracy in America he invokes the ability of the Socratic school to settle the question of the existence of God and that of the soul's survival over the body as the substance that gave Platonic philosophy a "sublime spark." According to Tocqueville its "great literary reputation" has survived over those of other schools of ancient philosophy precisely because it was joined to spiritualism.<sup>23</sup> This claim cannot be discarded by the skeptical reader as a mere rhetorical ploy since Tocqueville praises Platonic philosophy also in private for its appeal to the immaterial. This is what he has to say about it to his friend Gustave de Beaumont in a letter in which he tries momentarily to escape the vile spectacle of political ambitions in France to contemplate instead the principles that nourish a noble instinct in man.

I was reflecting the other day: going over in my mind the works of the human spirit which have most seized the imagination of the human race and which possess the most duration and brilliance, I found that in a great majority of cases it was those books in which the great principles of the beautiful and the good, as well as the high and salutary theories of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul have penetrated the most profoundly; these great works have best put in relief and exhibited those

principles and those theories. There one finds, then, the most durable and most efficient cause of the great literary successes, which proves that after all it is in that direction that the heart of mankind tends in the most energetic and most continuous manner. Deprive Plato, for example, of this aspiration toward immortality and the infinite which transports him, and leave him only with his useless forms, his incomplete and often ridiculous knowledge, his eloquence that escapes us at such a great distance, and he falls into obscurity and becomes unreadable. But Plato addressed himself to the noblest and most persevering instinct in our nature, and he will live as long as there are men; he will carry along even those who only half-understand him, and he will always be an enormous figure in the world of intellects.<sup>24</sup>

Tocqueville's own work and personal conduct consistently affirm that the greatness of man is irrevocably linked to his belief in the existence of God and immortality of the soul. Writing to Louis de Kergolay on August 8, 1838 he declares: "There is continuously a spiritual and great aspiration in this man [Plato], which moves and elevates me. I believe without doubt, it is owed especially to this fact that he so gloriously crossed the centuries; after all, in all times men like to be talked to about their soul even though they occupy themselves only with their bodies."<sup>25</sup> He is convinced absolutely that man achieves his capacity for greatness only by affirming this belief, which for him is incontrovertibly connected to morality, and in this he shows a great affinity with Pascal who states:

It is beyond doubt that, whether the soul is mortal or immortal, this must make a whole difference in morality. And yet the philosophers have steered their morality independently of this: they deliberate to spend an hour [on it]. [The philosophy of] Plato, prepared [the way] for Christianity. [Consider the] duplicity of the philosophers who did not discuss the immortality of the soul. [The] disingenuousness of their dilemma [is seen] in Montaigne.<sup>26</sup>

Tocqueville's doubt therefore would appear to stem from something other than what he considers to be a reasonable belief in the otherworldly. This study suggests it is confined to his uneasiness about accepting specific doctrines of the Catholic Church. For example he criticizes the proclamation of the bull "*Ineffabilis Deus*" by Pope Pius IX on December 8, 1854 making it mandatory to believe after 2000 years in the Church's history in the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary as a condition to remain Catholic.<sup>27</sup> Although this illustration postdates his writing of Democracy in America, it points to the particular character of Tocqueville's battle with disbelief, which is reminiscent of the problem that afflicts Rousseau's Savoyard Vicar.

What doubled my confusion was that I was born in a church which decides everything and permits no doubt; therefore, the rejection of a single point made me reject all the rest, and the impossibility of accepting so many absurd decisions also detached me from those which were not absurd. By being told "Believe everything," I was prevented from believing anything, and I no longer knew where to stop.<sup>28</sup>

The identification of the precise nature of Tocqueville's disbelief helps then to confine it to doctrines he finds repugnant to reason. Just as important it helps to attenuate the charge that he views religion only as a tool to achieve political good by bringing to the fore that he also views it as an end in itself for its capacity to foster human greatness.

It is safe to say that religion, at least the universal belief in the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, for Tocqueville contains its own intrinsic value for attenuating man's existential angst. Just as he discovered early in life metaphysics cannot suppress this anxiety so inseparable from the human condition, experience taught him also later that no worldly diversion can quell it even as he spent the greater part of his life seeking solace by devoting himself to political and scholarly work.

Tocqueville's solution for coping with the mental anguish his doubt causes him is to find distraction in work to escape Pascal's incisive depiction of the human condition. "Nothing is more intolerable to man than to be in a state of complete rest, without passions, without business, without diversion, without industry. He feels then his nothingness, his abandonment, his inadequacy, his dependence, his powerlessness, his emptiness. Forthwith he will bring from the depth of his soul boredom, blackness, sadness, sorrow, heartache, despair."<sup>29</sup> Writing to his friend Corcelle after one of his many illnesses, this time with pleurisy a few years before his death, he expresses the consolation he draws from his work.

I have nevertheless returned seriously to my work since eight days and I am beginning to find in it not only the calm that I needed, but also a certain drive that I no longer knew since I had left the countryside. I feel, more and more, that work is my only refuge and that it is when I am well

entrenched in it that I can find this relaxation that so many others do not begin to encounter except by stopping to work. The study of the Greek roots [of words] would tire me less, I think, than my own erring thoughts about my [troubled] times and inability to penetrate the great problems of human destiny.<sup>30</sup>

Tocqueville's withdrawal from political life made him feel more acutely with time the need to find diversion in work to escape what Pascal describes as "the natural misfortune of our weak, mortal and miserable condition."<sup>31</sup> In this he clearly embodies the restlessness Pascal maintains assails man in the absence of God in his life. "It is always because my soul would find itself ill at ease in its abode, that it went to seek, at all costs, the lively diversion of a great work of the mind."<sup>32</sup> It is noteworthy that Tocqueville continuously invokes the language of Pascal in his private correspondence and public writing to affirm like him that no diversion can console man of his estrangement from God, which chills the soul. Two years before his death he writes to Louis de Kergolay.

You know that the most fixed principle in my mind is that there is never a period in life in which one can rest himself; that the effort outside oneself and even more inside oneself is necessary and even more necessary as one grows old than in youth. I compare man in this world to a traveler who walks unceasingly toward a region more and more cold, and who is obliged to gesticulate more as he goes further. The great sickness of the soul is the cold. And to fight against this fearsome illness,

we must not only maintain the lively movement of our mind with work but also by contact with our fellowmen and the affairs of this world...<sup>33</sup>

Yet, his two primary occupations, politics and writing, did not completely bring him the respite he sought so fervently. Despite his commitment to political participation Tocqueville painfully discovered after a long career in politics that the political life has its own limitations. Politics in the end failed to satisfy his natural taste for great actions and great virtues because it offered such a disquieting spectacle of human baseness and with it the despairing realization of the impossibility to achieve his conceived project of fusing religion and liberty. Likewise, literary success did not help to cure him from the restlessness and malaise that was a source of constant affliction to his soul.

Tocqueville's most definitive word about his religious sentiments are recorded approximately two years prior to his death in a letter, February 26, 1857, to his confidant and spiritual advisor, Madame Swetchine. He makes this confession in the context of his chronic dissatisfaction with himself, which was re-awakened after his 1856 success with the publication of L'Ancien régime et la révolution, a success that left him wanting for the greatness he craved and yet knew could not be satisfied solely with worldly achievement. It is noteworthy that Tocqueville carefully differentiates between what he characterizes as religious sentiments and beliefs in his correspondence with Madame Swetchine just as he cautiously makes a clear distinction between religious habits and convictions in his travel notes about the status of religion in America. This division, as will be shown in a later chapter, underlines his debt to Pascal for whom religious sentiments and convictions are the preserves of the heart inasmuch as they are inspired by divine grace and subsist independent of reason. In contrast, beliefs and habits depend on

reason insofar as habits confirm the proofs outlined by reason to incline the body to beliefs.

[H]ere is another [cause] well worthy of pity! This one is in the incessant and always vain effort of a mind which aspires to certainty and cannot grasp it; which more than any other perhaps needs it and less than any other can enjoy it peacefully. The sight of the problem of human existence preoccupies me ceaselessly and overwhelms me ceaselessly. I can no more penetrate this mystery than I can remove my eye from it. It excites me and demoralizes me by turns. In this world I find human life inexplicable and in the other frightening. I believe strongly in another life, since God who is sovereignly just, has given us the idea; in this other life, to the remuneration of good and bad, since God has allowed us to distinguish them and has given us the liberty to choose; but outside of these clear notions, everything that go beyond the limits of this world appear to me to be encircled in a darkness that terrifies me.<sup>34</sup>

Tocqueville's acknowledged struggle to settle the eternal questions of religion makes it understandable that his religious teaching would be overshadowed by some ambivalence that leaves it open to varied interpretations. Doris Goldstein's explanation for the apparent disjunction in Tocqueville's religious teaching offers a comprehensive view of religion's importance to him that goes beyond mere political utility. She argues that to ignore Tocqueville's continued personal concerns with religion and "his residual Christian beliefs is to make a far too secular thinker of him [that] neglects the connections between his personal religious beliefs and his historical and theoretical



statements about religion.” She maintains that Tocqueville had an innate “feeling” or “need” for religion and concludes:

If to be “religious” is to believe in a Deity whose existence gives the world order and meaning, then Tocqueville was religious. From the existence of God he derived belief in a moral and physical order, in the immortality of the soul, and in the human capacity for free and responsible action. Even though his reason for accepting these precepts were frequently couched in terms of “need” and “utility,” he did accept them. He found both the need and the justification for religious belief within himself, and assumed that these were characteristics of human nature in general. Thus, his functional approach to religious phenomena or, as Tocqueville himself described it, his tendency to consider religion “from a human point of view,” rested ultimately upon conclusions that he had drawn from introspection.<sup>35</sup>

### **How the Tension between Equality and Liberty in France Helped to Shape Tocqueville’s Political Doctrine**

Tocqueville worried continuously that Liberty was especially threatened in France where the passion for equality subsumed the desire for freedom. France, throughout his short life, continued to be convulsed by the revolutionary spasms that established democracy by abolishing the old social structure and eliminating traditional institutions, including religion. His contemporaries did not share his commitment to the liberal values that inspired the revolution of 1789 when the nobility, the clergy and the third estate united to combat the absolutism of the monarchy on the eve of the bloody terror.

Throughout his tenure in the Chamber of Deputies (1839-1848) under the July Monarchy, liberals believed that liberty could be founded on an artificial bourgeois aristocracy while democrats ignored the political value of liberty preferring to believe that equality was enough to produce it. The first believed that the bourgeoisie could assume the role previously occupied by the nobility while the latter believed that if all had an equal right to concur in the government they would all be perfectly free because no one could exercise a tyrannical power over them.

Tocqueville opposed them both because he believed liberty and equality to be closely intertwined although not easily reconciled in France inasmuch as democracy there was founded upon a system of social inequality, which exacerbates the democratic obsession with equality. He believed the democrats' view to be the ideal to which all democratic people tend but that between this ideal and reality less perfect forms of democracy exist. For example, he argues that equality can be established in civil society but not in the political world or there can be equality in the political world without political freedom insofar as one might be equal to all those like oneself excepting the one who rules as master over all. His unique perspective was instrumental in shaping his political doctrine, which focuses on reviving the spirit of liberty and equality that stirred France on the eve of the bloody terror.

The passions which had just disturbed so violently the various classes of society seemed suddenly to cool down in this hour when, for the first time in two centuries, these classes were about to act together... All had demanded with equal fervor the restoration of the great Assembly, now reborn. Each of them saw in that reunion the means of realizing his

fondest hopes. The Estates-General were to meet at last: a common joy filled those divided hearts and bound them together for an instant before they were to separate forever.

At that moment all minds were struck by the peril of disunion. A supreme effort was made to agree. Instead of trying to find the causes of difference, men wished to find only the common grounds of agreement: the destruction of arbitrary power, the self-government of the nation, the recognition of the rights of every citizen, liberty of the press, personal freedom, the mitigation of the law, a strengthening of justice, religious toleration, the abolition of commercial and industrial restriction- these were the things demanded by everyone...

I think that no epoch of history has ever witnessed so large a number so passionately devoted to the public good, so honestly forgetful of themselves, so absorbed in the contemplation of the common interest, so resolved to risk everything they cherished in their private lives, so willing to overcome the small sentiments of their hearts. This was the general source of that passion, courage, and patriotism from which all the great deeds of the French Revolution were to issue.

The spectacle was short, but it was one of incomparable grandeur. It will never be effaced from the memory of mankind. All foreign nations witnessed it, applauded it, were moved by it...

I venture to say that there is but one people on this earth which could have staged such a spectacle. I know my nation- I know but all too

well her errors, her faults, her foibles, and her sins. But I also know of what she is capable. There are enterprises which only the French nation can conceive; there are magnanimous resolutions which this nation alone dares to take. She alone will suddenly embrace the common cause of humanity, willing to fight for it; and if she be subject to awful reverses, she has also sublime moments which sweep her to heights which no other people will ever reach.<sup>36</sup>

Tocqueville invested great hopes in the realization of his political doctrine particularly because France had once before for a brief moment managed to overcome her habitual obsession for equality with an overwhelming passion for liberty. If she could do it once Tocqueville believed with proper guidance she could do it effectively a second time. France came close to harmonizing the ideals of liberals and democrats during that “first stage of ’89, when the spirit of equality and liberty” were the supreme expression of every Frenchman’s desires. “[W]hen they wanted to create not only democratic institutions but free ones; when they sought not only to destroy privileges but to honor and recognize rights. It was a time of youth, enthusiasm, pride, a time of generous and sincere emotions, whose memory, despite its mistakes, will always be preserved by humanity, and which, for a long time to come, will trouble the sleep of all those who wish to corrupt or enslave France.”<sup>37</sup>

Despite his anxiety about democratic equality, Tocqueville accepts it because he recognizes that liberty can no longer have a foundation in aristocratic inequality. He notes in one of his notebooks how dangerous it is to limit access to government to a single class in the new age of democracy: “Anyone who, in the centuries upon which we

are about to embark, attempts to base liberty upon aristocracy is doomed to failure...

Anyone who attempts to retain power within a single class, by whatever name it may be called, is doomed to failure.”<sup>38</sup> He accepts equality for this reason and focuses on

finding the means to realize in France the equilibrium between liberty and equality. He learned from his sojourn in America that religion helps to maintain democratic liberty.

Consequently, he spent his entire political career in his native France on the elusive quest to actualize his political doctrine while pursuing at the same time his cherished hope to reconcile liberty and religion, which was extremely important to him personally.

### **How for Tocqueville Religion Helps to Maintain an Equilibrium between Equality and Liberty**

A close connection exists for Tocqueville between religion and liberty, which occupies the preeminent place in his hierarchy of beliefs, followed closely by friendship and patriotism. Religion is closely connected to Tocqueville’s passion, “the love of liberty and human dignity.”<sup>39</sup> He derives his ardent passion for liberty from the religious idea of free will and the responsibility for one’s action associated with that concept.

Fearing that man exhibits in democracy a far greater love for equality, which constantly eludes him and hence absorbs him completely causing him to subordinate everything to it, Tocqueville invests high hopes in religion for preserving his beloved liberty. He attributes the incomparable difference that exists between the flourishing liberty in American democracy and its striking absence in France to the important place religion occupies in American society.

There exist more family ties than are supposed between political passions and religious passions. On both sides general goods, immaterial

to a certain degree, are in sight; on both sides an ideal of society is pursued, a certain perfecting of the human species, the picture of which raises souls above contemplation of private interests and carries them away. For my part, I more easily understand a man animated at the same time both by religious passion and political passion than by political passion and the passion for well-being, for example. The first two can hold together and be embraced in the same soul, but not the second two. There is another reason that is less general and less grand, but perhaps actually more conclusive, which explains to me why the two passions go together and stimulate each other: that is the service that they are often called upon to render to each other. Free institutions are often the natural and sometimes indispensable instruments of religious passions. Nearly all the efforts that the moderns have made toward liberty they have made because of the need for manifesting or defending their religious opinions. It is religious passion that pushed the Puritans to America and led them to want to govern themselves there. The two English revolutions were made to win liberty of conscience. It is the same need that made the Huguenot nobility tend toward republican opinions in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in France. Religious passions in all these cases aroused political passions, and the political passions served the free development of others.<sup>40</sup>

Just as religion helps to sustain liberty, so does friendship in Tocqueville's new kind of liberalism. It brings like-minded people to form organizations that foster liberty. "In my opinion, the march of time, the developments of well-being,...[dots appear in the

text] have, in America, taken away from the religious element three-quarters of its original power. However, all that remains of it is greatly agitated. Religious men in the United States meet, speak, act in common more than anywhere else.”<sup>41</sup> Tocqueville thus finds that when friendship grows from shared moral sentiments and ideas it negates the passion for well-being equality engenders. Moreover, on a more personal level it brings solace and nourishes hope, especially under the yoke and misery of despotism. Weary of the political situation in France following Louis-Napoléon’s *coup d’état* he has this to say about friendship: “I find bearable only the company of people who think and feel like me. The homeland is nowhere but there.”<sup>42</sup> In short, friendship is for Tocqueville not only a “beautiful passion” but also a political virtue even though he bitterly laments a year after the *coup d’état*: “Remember that in politics friendships are not negotiated as in private life and that their greatest and may be their only bonds are common hatreds.”<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, despite this uncharacteristic display of cynicism his correspondence is replete with testimonies of the enduring pleasures he derived from friendship.

I thank you with all my heart for your letter, my dear friend, I have never felt more deeply than while reading it the value of the friendship that unites us. Let us hold onto that feeling with all our might, my dear Louis: it alone in this world is firm and stable. As long as we can support ourselves on each other with confidence this way, we will never be weak...It [friendship] cannot arise at all ages; but once it does arise, I do not see why age should weaken it or even make it change its nature, especially for those who, understanding all of its value, watch over it

unceasingly and do not allow to alter what alone sustains it, confidence in great as well as in small things.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, Tocqueville regards patriotism as a sacred duty that promotes the proud and manly virtue that makes liberty possible. In his detailed outline for a projected book “The European Revolution,” which was to be a sequel to *L’Ancien régime*, Tocqueville reserves a section that seeks to justify patriotism to show why Christian moralists are wrong to subordinate it to humanity.

Man has been created by God (I do not know why) in such a way that the larger the object of his love the less directly attached he is to it. His heart needs particular passions; he needs limited objects for his affections to keep these firm and enduring. There are but few who will burn with ardent love for the entire human species. The way in which Providence lets most people work for the good of humanity seems to divide this great object into many smaller parts, making each of these fragments worthy objects of love to those whose compose them. If everyone fulfills his duties in that way (and within these limits such duties are not beyond anyone’s natural capacities if properly directed by morals and reason), the general good of humanity would be produced by the many, despite the absence of more direct efforts by a few. I am convinced that the interests of the human race are better served by giving every man a particular fatherland than by trying to inflame his passions for the whole of humanity. The latter, whatever one may do, the common man will



perceive only from a viewpoint that is distant, aloof, uncertain, and cold.

(A good idea, which could be fruitful, though badly sketched here.)<sup>45</sup>

Tocqueville wants to suffuse democratic equality foremost with religious values and secondarily with a respect for friendship and patriotism because even though he accepted the ascendance of democracy as the work of Providence, he nevertheless maintained all his life great reservations about its ability to foster liberty. The great personal demands equality places on the individual produce a propensity toward social atomization in democratic societies that has nefarious effects on liberty. These demands preclude democratic man not only from cultivating the sublime aspirations that inclined aristocratic societies toward greatness but also from fully attending to the public duties that allow him to safeguard his liberty. “I have always said that it is more difficult to stabilize and to maintain liberty in our new democratic societies than in certain aristocratic societies of the past. But I shall never dare to think it impossible.”<sup>46</sup> Consequently, Tocqueville appeals principally to religion to carve a path to liberty in democracy because religion’s emphasis on the otherworldly helps to refocus democratic man’s commonplace desires for material well-being and the petty ambitions that feed them.

It is equally important to note that Tocqueville ascribes to the presence of liberty in America and its absence in France another cause, viz., the manner in which democratic equality was established in each of these countries. This cause is relevant to the overall comprehension of this study as it is directly related to the character of the democratic state and the influence its foundation holds over the religious sentiments of democratic citizens. Tocqueville argues cogently that the Americans and the French have adapted

differently to their democratic social state for the following reason. Whereas the first constituted themselves into that state to practice their religion in freedom, the latter substituted an aristocratic society for a democratic one and in that process jettisoned all their institutions, excepting only the oppressive administrative centralization, which resulted in calamitous effects for liberty. Administrative centralization destroyed in France the spirit of self-reliance that permeates American democratic life.

The establishment of democracy from these two opposite points bore divergent consequence for political liberty in America and France. First, the Americans enjoy a peaceful democratic equality conducive to liberty while the French have to contend with a revolutionary equality that is not. Second, whereas American equality encompasses legal equality and social equality, equality in France consists in mere equality before the law combined with inequality in social relations. Thus, the general character of the American social state gives democracy there an opposite orientation from that of the French. The first tends toward liberty whereas the second is naturally carried alternatively between anarchy and despotism. Tocqueville is unequivocal that the presence of religion and a ubiquitous equality at the founding of America allowed it to conciliate equality with liberty whereas their absence at that of France resulted in an antagonistic duality between equality and liberty to the detriment of the latter.

Tocqueville deduces from these observations that religion has indeed acquired a greater social and political value with modernity. Modern democracy,<sup>47</sup> which is coeval with the enlightenment's proclamation of the need to submit the objects of all beliefs to the individual effort of reason, leaves man more alone and isolated than he was under aristocracy's hierarchic social structure. Tocqueville draws a parallel between

aristocratic and democratic societies to show that the utility of religion increases with the relaxation of the interdependent relations common to the hierarchic order of aristocratic societies which serve to maintain the social state into a cohesive whole. In aristocratic societies, man was bound to several of his fellow citizens by social traditions delineated by a very distinct and immobile class structure. In contrast, man in democratic society finds himself virtually without any resources other than his reason to meet both his spiritual and material needs in a fluid social structure. His boundless independence leaves him little time for contemplation and prey to countless temptations he is ill-equipped to combat. Thus, on a practical level religion, more specifically Christianity,<sup>48</sup> provides a moral anchor to man for his own good and that of the social state while on a spiritual level it helps him to cope with the existential restlessness of the human condition, which the vicissitudes of democratic life further exacerbates. In short, religion binds man to his fellowmen by providing a highly integrated and widely moral system for society, which imposes duties on him for his own good and that of the state.

In a letter to Louis de Kergolay, Tocqueville likens the role of religion in society to the “Victorian sexual code” insofar as it is “a form which powerful minds, whether for good or evil, break through, but which serves as a barrier for the weak and ordinary.”<sup>49</sup> It is no wonder then that Tocqueville, for whom democracy is synonymous with mediocrity and conformity, *inter alia*, looks to religion to restrain desires and discipline wants that are destructive to liberty with the sunset of the aristocratic era.

Tocqueville believes that the value of religion increases in democratic societies because equality fosters an egoistic individualism, which privileges the private over the public, as each is self-absorbedly engaged in the pursuit of material well-being. Because

it is self-referenced democratic individualism also engenders moral and intellectual isolation, which can be both valuable and dangerous insofar as it encourages the efforts of individual reason on the one hand and intellectual conformity on the other.

Individualism leads to conformity because at the same time that it compels intellectual self-reliance in practical affairs it also leaves democratic citizens who are completely absorbed in the competitive pursuit of an equality that always threatens to elude them with little leisure for speculative studies. Democratic man's absorption in material pursuit disposes him to place little value on intellectual activities if they are not directly related to practical matters that affect his worldly interests. These inclinations leave him bereft of the intellectual capacity and will to challenge common opinion. Moreover, the similarity men share in times of equality disposes them to have little faith in one another and to put instead unlimited trust in the judgment of the public; they assume that because "all have the same enlightenment truth is found on the side of the greatest number."<sup>50</sup> The tendency to abdicate individual autonomy to follow the will of the majority holds the potential for encouraging moral ineptitude. Religion, particularly Christianity, provides a counterbalance to conformity because it imposes on man the responsibility to submit his thoughts and actions to the rigors of individual moral judgment, which is a precondition for liberty.

### **How Tocqueville Defines the Connection He Makes between Religion and Liberty**

Because the concept of liberty is so closely connected to Tocqueville's religious thought, it is worthwhile to examine at this juncture the meaning it holds for him by reviewing one by one his three separate attempts to define it in his published works.

First, in Volume One of Democracy in America, which he published in January 1835, he acclaims as a beautiful definition of liberty a passage taken from a speech given in 1645 by John Winthrop, the Deputy-Governor of Massachusetts, which he found in Cotton Mather's Magnalia Christi Americana. It is worth noting that Tocqueville reproduces the original text faithfully with the exception that in the first sentence he translates "liberty" as "independence." Winthrop who was called upon to defend himself from the accusation of infringing upon the liberties of the people, defines liberty in the following term.

Nor would I have you to mistake in the Point of your own *Liberty*. There is a *Liberty* of corrupt Nature, which is affected both by *Men* and *Beasts*, to do what they list; and this *Liberty* is inconsistent with *Authority*, impatient of all Restraint; by this *Liberty*, *Sumus Omnes Deteriores* (We are all the worse): Tis the Grand Enemy of *Truth* and *Peace*, and all the *Ordinances* of God are bent against it. But there is a Civil, a Moral, a Federal *Liberty*, which is the proper End and Object of *Authority*; it is a *Liberty* for that only which is *just* and *good*; for this *Liberty* you are to stand with the hazard of your very *Lives*.<sup>51</sup>

Tocqueville acclaims as beautiful Winthrop's definition of liberty because it is premised on moral law and corresponds with his own belief that there is a reciprocal bond between liberty and religion insofar as each needs the other to flourish. His convictions regarding the mutual dependence of moral and political liberty and his study of American democracy prove to him irreversibly that religion needs liberty for the expression of its beliefs and liberty needs religion to maintain its vigor in an age of

equality that exalts individualism. “To persuade men that respect for divine and human laws are the best means to remain free and that liberty is the best means to remain honest and religious, this is not possible you will say. I am also tempted to believe it. But the thing is true nevertheless, and I will attempt to say it at great risk.”<sup>52</sup>

Religion teaches that obedience to divine law makes man independent of other men because it demands the obedience of each and all to the one and same immutable law. A society organized on the basis of that superior law will enjoy freedom because if all consent to obey the same higher law then the independence of each does not conflict with that of all and order prevails. In other words liberty does not have a secure foundation unless it is structured on moral law, which binds everyone equally to its precepts.

You seem to contest the political function of religions. Here we assume truly antithetical positions. You say that the fear of God does not stop people from murder. Even if this were true- and I doubt whether it is really true- what is the conclusion? Whether secular or religious, the function of law is not to eliminate crime (which is usually the product of deranged instincts and of such violent passions as will not be halted by the mere existence of laws). The efficacy of laws consists in their impact on society, in their regulation of matters of daily life, and in setting the general temper of habits and ideas. Laws, and especially religious laws, are thus so necessary that there never has been a people of any importance that could do without them. I know that there are many who now think that one day they may be able to do without this regimen, and every

morning they keep looking eagerly for this new day. I think they are looking in vain. I should even be more inclined to believe in the coming of some new religion than in the continuation of the prosperity and greatness of modern societies without religion. If Christianity must in effect disappear, as many people are quick to say it, it will happen to us what happened to the ancients before its arrival, a long moral decay, a vicious and troubled old age that will end by bringing from I don't know where or how a new renovation.<sup>53</sup>

Tocqueville's conviction of the interdependence of religion and liberty drives his unwavering commitment to promote their harmonious coexistence in his beloved France and compels him to define himself as a "liberal of a new kind."<sup>54</sup> It was the preoccupation of his whole life and he was willing to sacrifice his tranquillity to obtain it because he saw it as the only way to prevent democratic equality from completely eroding man's capacity for greatness. "I am [convinced] that man's true grandeur lies only in the harmony of the liberal sentiment and religious sentiment, both working simultaneously to animate and restrain souls, and [my] sole political passion for thirty years has been to bring about this harmony."<sup>55</sup>

Tocqueville is convinced that liberty is more dependent on religion in democracies than in aristocracies for the simple reason that in the first the tempo of life rarely ascends above a prosaic quality whereas in the second it takes a more poetic flight. This difference leaves democratic citizens bereft of the ideals that foster the aristocratic citizen's nobility of soul and impel him to be free of the selfish cares and pettiness that enslaves human beings in general and prompt them to place personal interests above

common ones. Being much more absorbed with their equality, which they confuse with liberty,<sup>56</sup> democratic citizens are always in danger of forfeiting their right to liberty by neglecting to attend to the common good, the only incontestable way of preserving it. The individualistic notion of liberty engendered by equality leaves each too weak to combat alone an encroaching power. Thus, by attending solely to his private interest democratic man soon finds himself fettered by the despotic power of many or one. Tocqueville illuminates for us the differentiation he makes between the aristocratic and democratic notion of liberty in an article, "*Etat social et politique de la France*," he wrote for the London and Westminster Review in 1836 at the invitation of his friend John Stuart Mill.

Liberty can in effect occur to the human mind under two different forms.

One can see in it the use of a common right or the enjoyment of a privilege. To want to be free in one's actions or in a few of one's actions, not because all men have a general right to independence, but because one possesses oneself a particular right to remain independent, such was the manner in which one understood liberty in the middle ages, and such it was almost always understood in aristocratic societies, wherein the conditions are very unequal, and wherein the human mind having once contracted the habit of privileges, ends by ranking among the number of privileges the usage of all the goods of this world. This notion of liberty referring itself only to the man who has conceived it, or at the most to the class to which it belongs, can subsist in a nation where general liberty does not exist. It happens even sometime that the love of liberty is all the more intense in some when the necessary guarantees to liberty are not to be



found for all. The exception is then all the more precious as it is more rare. This aristocratic notion of liberty produces in those who have conceived it an exalted sentiment of their individual value, a passionate taste for independence. It gives to egoism energy and a singular power. Conceived by individuals, it has often brought men to the most extraordinary actions; adopted by an entire nation it has created the greatest people that ever were...

Following the modern notion, the democratic notion, and I dare say the just notion of liberty, each man, being presumed to have received from nature the necessary lights to conduct himself, holds from birth an equal and imprescriptible right to live independent of his fellow creatures, in all that is of concern only to himself, and to regulate as he wants it his own destiny.

From the time that this notion of liberty has penetrated profoundly in the mind of a people, and has solidly established itself, absolute and arbitrary power becomes no more than a material fact, a passing accident. For each having an absolute right over himself, it results from this that the sovereign can emanate only from the union of the will of all. From that time also obedience has lost its morality, and there is no middle ground between the masculine and proud virtues of the citizen and the low subservience of the slave.

As the ranks equalize themselves in a nation, this notion of liberty tends naturally to prevail.<sup>57</sup>

In comparing the different notions of liberty proper to aristocratic and modern democratic societies, Tocqueville points to the elitist quality of the first and the universal quality of the second and the political consequences that result from these differences. In the first case, liberty endures not only because it is founded on force but also because it is a habit born of privilege, which is jealously guarded by those who possess it whether they are an individual, a class or a nation. It is displayed by a proud egoism that produces human greatness insofar as it is premised on a code of honor that propels men to great actions. In contrast, the modern democratic notion of liberty, which is founded on the concept of equality, is more precarious insofar as its foundation on self-reliance leads to opposed consequences: either equality in freedom or equality under despotism. The first is possible when all make public affairs their principal affair and the second establishes itself when everyone is absorbed with his particular interests. Tocqueville believes democratic liberty can free itself from the shackles of particular interests if it incorporates the moral content of Christianity from which it derives its moral authority. Without this moral compass, which insists on an equal moral responsibility for each man and also of his duties to God, to himself, and to others, it risks succumbing to a slavish individualism.

Tocqueville offers a final version of his understanding of liberty in his last work, L'Ancien régime et la révolution published in 1856, which is almost identical to Winthrop's definition whose beauty he first acclaimed in Democracy in America more than twenty years before. If nothing else it shows that he did not waver over the years from his conviction about the interdependence of liberty and religion. However, this definition of liberty defers in a significant way from Winthrop's account insofar as liberty

is something more than a higher law to regulate man's actions. It is also a virtue and the soul of the one endowed with it exalts freedom, is proud and dignified, in other words he is a citizen.

[t]hat which, in all times, has so strongly attached certain men's hearts to [it], are its own attractions, its own peculiar charm, independent of its benefits; it is the pleasure of being able to speak, act, and breathe without constraint, under the government of God and the laws alone. Whoever seeks for anything from freedom but itself is made for slavery... Do not ask me to analyze this sublime desire, it must be felt. It enters of itself into the great hearts that God has prepared to receive it; it fills them, it fires them. One must give up on making this comprehensible to the mediocre souls who have never felt it.<sup>58</sup>

In this definition, Tocqueville paints a version of aristocratic liberty that incorporates the notion of moral liberty taught him by his beloved tutor, Abbé Lesueur, during his lessons on Catechism and the self-governance of Rousseau's virtuous citizen. It combines submission to divine law with freedom from the passions that enslave man.

Written during the repressive years of the Second Empire this passage reflects a longing for the moral character Tocqueville associates with the old aristocratic feudal order as he beholds the national degeneracy that was leading France further and further away from the principles he held so dear. He recalls with nostalgia this all too forgotten period in a letter to his brother Hubert de Tocqueville dated February 23, 1857 written while preparing his notes to undertake the writing of the second volume of L'Ancien régime et la révolution, which he did not have time to complete before his death.

For the first time in the twenty years that I have lived in this country [the chateau at Tocqueville in Normandy], I have undertaken to put a little order into all the old papers that are heaped up here in what is called the charter room... I have encountered the line of our fathers through nearly four hundred years... I noticed, in doing this reading, that three hundred years ago, we served as godfathers for a very large number of the inhabitants of the village: new proof of the sweet and paternal relations that, in that time, still existed between the upper and lower classes; relations that were replaced in so many places by sentiments of jealousy, suspicion, and often hatred.<sup>59</sup>

The paternalism of the past was associated with certain reciprocal obligations that bound organically the relations of men in the political community to safeguard liberty. The nobility employed its free time, which was made possible by the labor of the commoners who served it, toward securing the political interests of the entire community by safeguarding them from the encroachment of monarchical power. Under aristocratic stratification, the devotion an inferior owed a superior and the protection the latter owed the former strengthened social cohesion insofar as the demands of mutual obligations caused each to forget himself to focus on the duties of his social rank. Since this organic bond of human affection is broken in democracies liberty in this regime necessarily has to be appended to religion. Tocqueville finds empirical evidence in his observation of American democracy of the need for a moral bond to replace the organic one that regulated human relations under aristocracy.

---

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Until Antoine R  dier’s discoveries, fragments of Tocqueville’s correspondence whose importance are priceless for shedding light on his religious sentiments and convictions were not available to the public. As noted in appendix A the first edition of his complete works, including his vast correspondence, published in the 1860’s by Madame de Tocqueville and his friend Gustave de Beaumont was truncated in great part to protect his memory and the privacy of his correspondents. This edited publication was all that was available to the public until Mr. R  dier’s research early last century allowed J. P. Mayer to undertake in the 1950’s to compile Tocqueville’s complete works (Oeuvres compl  tes), which contain the unedited version of his invaluable correspondence.

<sup>2</sup> Antoine R  dier, Comme disait Monsieur de Tocqueville, (Paris: Perrin, 1925), 39.

<sup>3</sup> J. P. Mayer, Alexis de Tocqueville, (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 16.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Jardin states that a controversy was sparked after Tocqueville’s death about the status of his faith. The commentators who viewed Tocqueville as a Catholic belonged to two schools: those who claim that he was always a believer; and those who have tried to show that toward the very end of his life he returned to Catholicism. Andr   Jardin, Tocqueville, A Biography, (NY: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1988), 528-533.

<sup>5</sup> In a letter, which is probably a response to one from his preceptor who apparently expressed sadness about his pupil’s abstention from religious practices, the approximately sixteen year old Tocqueville defends himself from the suspicions the good Abb   raised about the consequences of this fact on his good conduct. “Not happy to fulfill my obligations, I have prevented others from fulfilling theirs. I want to believe

---

that you did not think it over before accusing me of such cowardice. I may not have always given good example and in this sense I may be guilty without doubt; but to turn another from making his salvation because I do not have the courage to make mine, to want to expose him to dangers so that he shares them with me, it would be an evil act of which, God be thanked, I do not believe myself capable.” Letter to Abbé Lesueur (dated approximately 1821-1822) in Oeuvres complètes, correspondance familiale, établi par André Jardin, annoté par Jean-Louis Benoit et André Jardin, prefacé par Jean-Louis Benoit et soumis pour contrôle et approbation à Jean-Claude Casanova et Michelle Pérot, (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), tome XIV, 44. (Hereafter references to this work will be shown as OC XIV).

Tocqueville’s youthful sense of moral responsibility guides him to express similar sentiments in Democracy in America when in a general way he discusses the impact of false doctrines on the religious outlook of men in democratic centuries. His views on this issue are doubtless drawn from introspection since they echo the sentiments expressed in the foregoing letter to Abbé Leseur. “Carried along by an insensible current against which they do not have the courage to struggle and to which they nonetheless yield with regret, they abandon the faith that they love to follow the doubt that leads them to despair...In ceasing to believe religion true, the unbeliever continues to judge it useful. Considering religious beliefs under a human aspect, he recognizes their empire over mores, their influence on laws. He understands how they can make men live in peace and prepare them gently for death. He therefore regrets his faith after he has lost it, and deprived of a good of which he knows the entire value, he fears to take it away from those who still possess it.” Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, trans. & ed.

---

Harvey C. Mansfield & Delba Winthrop, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), I, 2, 9, 286. Also see Alexis de Tocqueville, De la démocratie en Amérique Oeuvres II, Bibliothèque de La Pléiade, ed. André Jardin with Jean-Claude Lamberti and James T. Schleifer, (Paris: editions Gallimard, 1992), I, 2, 9, 346-347. (Hereafter references to this work will appear as DA, volume, part, chapter for both the English translation and the French text with the page of the English translation preceding that of the French text and the two separated by a slash, e.g., DA I, 2, 9, 286/346-347).

<sup>6</sup> Letter to Arthur de Gobineau, September 5, 1843, in Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes: correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et d'Arthur de Gobineau, 6eme ed., ed. J. P. Mayer, intro. J. J. Chevalier, (Paris:Gallimard, 1959), tome IX, 45-46.

(Henceforth references to this work will appear as OC IX).

<sup>7</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Journey to America, trans. George Lawrence, ed. J. P. Mayer, (London: Faber & Faber LTD, 1959), 64. See also Alexis de Tocqueville, “*Voyage en Amérique*” in Oeuvre I, Bibliothèque de La Pléiade, édition publiée sous la direction d'André Jardin avec pour ce volume la collaboration de Françoise Mélonio et Lise Quéffelec, (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), 78. (Hereafter references to this work, which contains Tocqueville's travel notes abroad, will be shown as notes for a specific country in Oeuvres I. In cases where it is an ibidem the page # will appear for the English text first and the French text last, the two separated by a slash). It is worth noting that the dates for the entry under discussion here do not correspond in the English and French texts. The first shows an entry dated October 12, 1831 whereas the latter shows the same entry on October 2, 1831.

---

<sup>8</sup> In the same letter quoted above in note 3, Tocqueville explains his religious dilemma to Abbé Lesueur and begs him to show him a way out of it. “I told you more than once that I believe an exemplary life and the habit of piety to be the most happy state not only for the other world but also for this one. I told you that: I believe it firmly in fact. Although I am not very old, I have nevertheless already felt enough that there was not one sole pleasure really pure in what is named as such and that nothing could fix the inconstancy of the human heart if it is not a hope that does not end with life. I feel all of that stronger than I can express it. I have said it a thousand times in the intimacy of friendship, there is not one day that I do not regret bitterly the time in which religion was easy for me to follow, I have several time attempted on my own to put myself back on the road and... (Dots appear in the text). Find me, my dear friend, a means to tame my own heart, to fight an enemy one meets everywhere, who finds sometimes enough strength in our weakness to choke even the voice of reason, and then I will practice, I will be much happier than I am, I feel it.” Letter to Abbé Lesueur (dated approximately 1821-1822) in OC XIV, 44.

<sup>9</sup> I am indebted to Antoine Rédier who first brought to my attention this very important distinction. Comme disait Monsieur de Tocqueville, 57

<sup>10</sup> DA, II, 1, 5, 419/532-533.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 419/533.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 419/533.

<sup>13</sup> See Françoise Mélonio for the unanimous denouncement of Tocqueville by his French readers, both Protestants and Catholics, for what they characterized as his apology for the



---

entrapment of religion within the bounds of reason. Tocqueville and the French, trans.

Beth G. Raps, (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998).

Also see Sanford Kessler who argues that Tocqueville advocates a civil religion, which purports to be theocentric but in fact is designed to serve secular as opposed to

transcendent or otherworldly ends, Tocqueville's Civil Religion, (Albany: State

University of New York Press, 1994).

Finally see Jean-Claude Lamberti who asserts that Tocqueville's religious perspective in

Democracy in America shows that at the time he wrote this work he "had encountered

only the God of the philosophers and the scientists." Tocqueville and the Two

Democracies, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1989), 161.

<sup>14</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau defines the concept of a social religion in the Social Contract.

In his examination of the historical impact of religion on the civil state, Rousseau

reserves his most scathing comments for the established Christian church, which under

pretense of a "so-called kingdom of the other world was seen to become, under a visible

ruler, the most violent despotism of this world." He differentiates between the

Christianity of the established church and that of the Gospel.

[The religion of the Gospel is] the religion of the private person...[It is the] holy, sublime and true religion [under which] men, as children of the same God, look on all others as brothers, and the society which unites them is not dissolved by death...But this religion, having no specific connexion with the body politic...far from attaching the hearts of citizen to the state, this religion detaches them from it as from all other things of

---

this world; and I know nothing more contrary to the social spirit. It is said that a people of the true Christians would form the most perfect society imaginable. I see but one great flaw in this hypothesis, namely that a society of true Christians would not be a society of men... Christianity is a wholly spiritual religion, concerned with the things of heaven; the Christian's homeland is not of this world. The Christian does his duty, it is true, but he does it with profound indifference towards the good or ill success of his deeds... Christianity preaches only servitude and submission. Its spirit is too favourable to tyranny for tyranny not to take advantage of it. True Christians are made to be slaves they know it and they hardly care; this short life has too little value in their eyes... There is thus a profession of faith which is purely civil and of which it is the sovereign's function to determine the articles, not strictly as religious dogmas, but as sentiments of sociability, without which it is impossible to be either a good citizen or a loyal subject... The dogmas of the civil religion must be simple and few in number, expressed precisely and without explanations or commentaries. The existence of an omnipotent, intelligent, benevolent divinity that foresees and provides; the life to come; the happiness of the just; the punishment of sinners; the sanctity of the social contract and the law – these are the positive dogmas. As for the negative dogmas, I would limit them to a single one: no intolerance. Intolerance is something which belongs to the religions we have rejected.”

---

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract, trans. Maurice Cranston, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), bk.4, chap. 8, 179-186.

It is unthinkable that Tocqueville, who rebukes his young protégé Arthur de Gobineau for suggesting that Christianity is a religion for slaves, would agree totally with Rousseau. In his correspondence with Gobineau, Tocqueville undertakes a strong defense of Christianity, which he reproaches only for neglecting to teach the importance of public virtues. Letter to Arthur de Gobineau, September 5, 1843, and Letter to Arthur de Gobineau, October 2, 1843 in OC IX, 45-48 and 56-62 respectively.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Tocqueville, like Rousseau, recognizes the need to simplify the rituals of religion, or implicitly Catholicism, in order to make it more palatable to democratic citizens who scorn forms. DA, II, 1, 5, 421/546.

<sup>15</sup> See Seymour Drescher, Tocqueville and England, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 11.

<sup>16</sup> Tocqueville's religious convictions have been the subject of passionate controversies sparked by his own admission to Madame Swetchine about the metaphysical doubts, which begin to assail him from the age of sixteen. "My life until then had been spent in a complete security of faith which had not allowed doubt to penetrate my soul. Then doubt entered in it, rather it precipitated itself in it with an extreme violence, not only the doubt of this or that, but universal doubt. I felt suddenly the sensation which those who have assisted an earthquake speak of, when the ground shakes under their feet, the walls around them, the ceilings on their head, the furniture in their hands, the entire nature before their eyes. I was seized by the blackest melancholy, took an extreme distaste for life without knowing it, and somewhat assailed with confusion and terror at the sight of

---

the road left for me to follow in the world.” Letter to Madame Sophie Swetchine, February 26, 1857, in Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d’Alexis de Tocqueville et de Francisque de Corcelle, correspondance d’Alexis de Tocqueville et de Madame Swetchine, ed. J. P. Mayer, volume établi par Pierre Gibert et soumis pour contrôle et approbation à Claude Bressollette et André Jardin, (Paris: Gallimard, 1983) tome XV, 315. (Hereafter references to this work will appear as OC XV).

Tocqueville also confessed to his young protégé Arthur de Gobineau that “I am not a believer- this I am far from stating to boast- but all unbeliever that I am, I have never been able to defend myself from a profound emotion in reading the Scriptures.” See Letter to Arthur de Gobineau, October 2, 1843, in OC IX, 57. Lastly, as shown previously in this study he makes the same admission to his tutor Abbé Lesueur and his friend Charles Stoffels.

<sup>17</sup> Montesquieu, The Spirit of the Laws, trans. & ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller & Harold Samuel Stone, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pt. 5, bk. 24, chap. 1, 459.

<sup>18</sup> At this time only a copy of this letter, July 6, 1845, from a private collection is available at the *Commission de publication des oeuvres de Tocqueville*. I am grateful to Françoise Mélonio of the *Commission* who kindly provided me a copy. The *Commission* plans to publish the letter in a future volume of the *Oeuvres complètes* to be published under the title “*Correspondance à divers*.” Since the letter has not been published it is worthwhile to reproduce it entirely here to provide the context in which Tocqueville makes this assertion. Tocqueville writes to his friend Charles Stoffels, a philosopher, to

---

comment on a book he has written about religion and to explain why he disagrees with Stoffels' position, which in his view is an endorsement of Montalembert's liberal Catholic political agenda. (Tocqueville suspected the liberal Catholics of clericalism. Montalembert harbored a strong antipathy for democracy and scorn for America. He eventually rallied to Tocqueville's liberal position after the fall of the second empire in 1852 at which time he proclaimed himself Tocqueville's "intellectual heir." Tocqueville and the French, 117).

"With this book you belong to the school of Montalembert, to this school which instead of looking for the points by which religion and the century can draw closer seems to attach itself to prove where they are irreconcilable. According to the principles of this school, you look for the arguments which must naturally collide harshly with the opinions or if you want, the prejudices of our contemporaries. It is how you endeavor to demystify the Saint Bartholomew, to rehabilitate the inquisition, you praise the Monks and you attack the old principles of the Gallican Church. I don't want to discuss with you all these arguments. I am of an opinion absolutely contrary to yours on many and I am not completely of your opinion on any. But it is not of their truthfulness or of their absolute falseness that I want to speak here. What I want to address (and you will pardon me- I am neither a philosopher nor a theologian, but a statesman who believes in the necessity of religious beliefs and who desires passionately to conserve what is left of them in this country and to foster them, if the thing is possible-) is the extreme danger that such doctrines and the party which professes them and the newspapers which advocate them and the books which contain them have for religion and with it liberty."

---

See also J. P. Mayer, "Tocqueville as a Political Sociologist," *Political Studies*, I (1953), 133.

<sup>19</sup> Letter to Madame Sophie Swetchine, February 26, 1857, in OC XV, 315. See also Comme disait Monsieur de Tocqueville, 288 and Roger Boesche, The Strange Liberalism of Alexis de Tocqueville, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 185-186.

<sup>20</sup> Letter to Charles Stoffels, October 22, 1831, in Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes d'Alexis de Tocqueville, nouvelle correspondance de Alexis de Tocqueville, entièrement inédite, publiées par Madame de Tocqueville, (Paris: Michel Levy Frères, Libraires Editeurs, 1866) tome VII, 81-84. In this publication the letter is addressed to A. M. Charles \*\*\* omitting the last name for the reasons of privacy mentioned earlier in appendix A and note 1 of the present chapter. See also Alexis de Tocqueville, Selected Letters on Politics and Society, ed. Roger Boesche, trans. James Toupin and Roger Boesche, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985). 62-64.

<sup>21</sup> Letter to Eugène Stoffels, January 12, 1833, in Oeuvres complètes d'Alexis de Tocqueville, correspondance et oeuvres posthumes, (Paris: Michel Levy Frères, Libraires Editeurs, 1866), tome V, 422-423. (Henceforth references to this work will appear as OC V).

<sup>22</sup> DA, II, 3, 18, 591 & 593/748 & 750.

<sup>23</sup> DA, II, 2, 15, 520/659. Tocqueville's expresses a similar view in his analysis of Plato in his personal notes. In his notes Tocqueville states that morality is the principal characteristic of Plato's political doctrine, the quality that immortalizes his teaching. See Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes, mélanges, volume établi par Françoise

---

Mélonio, soumis pour contrôle et approbation à Jean-Claude Cassanova et Pierre Rosanvallon, (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 555 and note 2.

<sup>24</sup> Letter, April 22, 1838, in Tocqueville, Selected Letters, 130.

<sup>25</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Louis de Kergolay, ed. J. P. Mayer, texte établi par André Jardin, introduction et notes par Alain Lesourd, (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), tome XIII, 41. (Hereafter references to this work will appear as OC XIII).

<sup>26</sup> Blaise Pascal, Pensées, Texte de l'édition Brunswicg, intro. & notes Ch.-M. des Granges, (Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1964), nos. 219 & 220, 132.

<sup>27</sup> Letter to Francisque de Corcelle, December 28, 1854, in OC XV, 129.

<sup>28</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile or On Education, intro., trans., and notes by Allan Bloom, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1979), bk. 4, 268.

<sup>29</sup> Pensées, no. 131, 108.

<sup>30</sup> Letter, January 1, 1853, in OC XV, 69.

<sup>31</sup> Pensées, no. 139, 109-110.

<sup>32</sup> Letter to Gustave de Beaumont, January 2, 1858, in Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Gustave de Beaumont, ed. J. P. Mayer, texte établi, annoté et prefacé par André Jardin, (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 529.

<sup>33</sup> Letter, February 3, 1857, in OC XIII, 324.

<sup>34</sup> Letter in OC XV, 314-315.

<sup>35</sup> Doris S. Goldstein, Trial of Faith: Religion and Politics in Tocqueville's Thought, (New York, Oxford and Amsterdam: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, Inc., 1975), 8-9.

---

<sup>36</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, “The European Revolution” & Correspondence with Gobineau, intro., ed., and trans., John Lukacs, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1959), bk. 1, chap. VII, 85-87.

<sup>37</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, The Old Regime and the Revolution, ed. with an introduction and critical apparatus by François Furet and Françoise Mélonio, trans. Alan S. Kahan, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), I, 1, 2, 85. See also Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes II, L’Ancien régime et la révolution, édition définitive publiée sous la direction de J. P. Mayer, introduction par George Lefèbvre, (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), I, 1, 2, 72. (Henceforth all references to this work will appear as OR for the English translation and AR for the French text followed by volume, book, chapter, page with the pages of the English and French texts separated by a slash, e.g., OR/AR, I, 1, 2, 85/72).

<sup>38</sup> Tocqueville and the Two Democracies, 40-41.

<sup>39</sup> Letter to Henry Reeve, March 22, 1837, in Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes, correspondance anglaise: correspondance d’Alexis de Tocqueville avec Henry Reeve et John Stuart Mill, ed. J. P. Mayer, texte établi et annoté par J. P. Mayer et Gustave Rudler, intro. J. P. Mayer, (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), tome VI, 37. (Hereafter references to this work will appear as OC VI).

<sup>40</sup> Letter to Louis de Kergolay, October 18, 1847, in OC XIII, 209. See also Tocqueville, Selected Letters, 192.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 209 and Selected Letters, 193.

<sup>42</sup> Letter to Francisque de Corcelle, November 21, 1852, in OC XV, 62.

<sup>43</sup> Letter to Francisque de Corcelle, December 17, 1852, in *ibid.*, 67.



---

<sup>44</sup> Letter to Louis de Kergolay, March 27, 1828, in Tocqueville, Selected Letters, 35.

<sup>45</sup> “The European Revolution” & Correspondence with Gobineau, bk. 5, chap. III, 169-170.

<sup>46</sup> Letter to Arthur de Gobineau, January 24, 1857, in OC IX, 280. See also *ibid.*, 309.

<sup>47</sup> Tocqueville uses the term “*démocratie*” to designate the social state of the Anglo-Americans, which is characterized by equality of conditions or to designate a type of political regime characterized by the sovereignty of the people. Nevertheless, it was difficult to define the latter at the time Tocqueville wrote the two Democracies. We find evidence of this in an exchange of letters between Tocqueville and Kergolay in which Tocqueville seeks from his friend some clarification on one of the chapters he is writing for the second volume of Democracy in America. In his response Kergolay emphasizes the meaning of democracy as it is understood in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to make his point. He states: “It is both a social state and a political state. The first is the social movement toward equality and the second is still difficult to assess insofar as its essential and fundamental constitution is not yet a reality.” Letter to Tocqueville from Kergolay, June 6, 1838, in OC XIII, 17.

It is worth noting that Roger Boesche among others has shown that Tocqueville’s political vocabulary is sometimes not as clear as his ideas, because it reflects the new and still changing realities of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Likewise, Jean-Claude Lamberti reports that scholars, including George Wilson Pierson (Tocqueville and Beaumont in America, 6-7 with note, 158-159 and note, 165-166 and 757-758), Jack Lively (The Social and Political Thought of Alexis de Tocqueville, 49-50), James T. Schleifer (The Making of

---

Tocqueville's Democracy in America, 263-274 with notes, 345-347), and Marvin Zetterbaum (Tocqueville and the Problem of Democracy, 53-54), have identified at least half a dozen distinct meanings to his use of the term "*démocratie*." Lamberti compiles in a footnote the eleven different definitions of the word "*démocratie*" Schleifer found in Democracy in America. They are:

- (1) a fact;
- (2) an irresistible tendency;
- (3) a social revolution;
- (4) a social state;
- (5) the sovereignty of the people;
- (6) the practical realization of the idea of popular sovereignty;
- (7) the people (sometimes all the people, sometimes the "lower classes");
- (8) mobility;
- (9) the middle classes;
- (10) equality of conditions; and
- (11) the feeling of equality.

Lamberti compiles these various meanings into two groups that correspond to my understanding of the term as described above: (a) the democratic social state (i.e., 4, together with 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, and 11), and (b) government of the people, consisting of 5 and 6. As for 7 and 9 Lamberti believes they can have either a political or sociological interpretation, depending on the context. To support this last claim, he adduces Democracy in America, I, 2, 5, 217: "The Government of the Middle Classes," and Democracy in America, II, 2, 10, 135: "The Passion for Material Well-Being is

---

Essentially a Middle-Class Passion.” Tocqueville and the Two Democracies, 258, notes 12 and 14.

<sup>48</sup> Tocqueville is particularly critical of Islam in Democracy in America for confounding divine law with political maxims and civil and criminal law. Given his belief that it is best to maintain the separation of Church and state in democracy to prevent the identification of divine law with the instability inherent in the political laws, he implicitly suggests the incompatibility of Islam and democracy. DA, II, 1, 5, 419/533-534.

Tocqueville makes his most scathing remarks about Islam in a private letter, October 22, 1843, to Arthur de Gobineau, his young protégé and later Chef de Cabinet during his tenure as France’s Minister of Foreign Affairs with whom he had many disagreements about politics, religion, and Gobineau’s materialist theory on race. “While you are so severe with the religion [Christianity] which, after all, did so much to establish our leadership among the human race, it seems that you have a certain weakness for Islamism. This makes me think of another friend whom I met in Africa, where he had become converted to the Mohammedan religion. I was not impressed by this spectacle. I often studied the Koran when concerned with our relations with the Moslem populations of Algiers and the Orient. I must say that I emerged convinced that there are in the entire world few religions with such disastrous consequences for men than that of Mohammed. To me it is the primary cause of the now visible decadence of the Islamic world, and though it may be less absurd than the polytheism of the antiques, its social and political tendencies are, in my opinion, more to be feared, compared to paganism. I see it more like a decline rather than a progress. Here is something that it would be possible for me, I believe, to demonstrate to you clearly, if you ever had the bad idea to have yourself

---

circumcised.” See OC IX, 68-69. See also “The European Revolution” and Correspondence with Gobineau, 212.

Nevertheless, if Tocqueville shows an instinctive intellectual distaste for Islam he does not for this reason discount its occasional openness to enlightenment. “Islamism has not been inscrutable to enlightenment; it has often admitted in its bosom certain sciences or certain arts.” Tocqueville takes this position to object to the more extreme view being propagated in the France of the 1840’s that the Arabs are an inferior race comparable to the red-skinned Indians. By discounting the ancient civilization of the Arabs these theories hoped to justify the total subjugation of the Algerians and their eventual extinction to make way for colonialism. Tocqueville argued it was in France’s interest to reinvigorate and not continue to destroy the civilization of the Muslim societies it found in Africa, “as imperfect and backward as it is.” In one of his many prescient moments Tocqueville issues the following warning in his May 24, 1847, “*Rapports sur L’Algérie*” to the Chamber of Deputies. “The religious passions that the Koran inspires are to us, they say, hostile, and it is good to let them extinguish themselves in superstition and ignorance, through lack of jurists and priests. It would be to commit a great foolishness to attempt it. When religious passions exist in a nation, they always find men who take upon themselves to take advantage of them and drive them. Let disappear the natural and regular interpreters of religion, you will not abolish the religious passions, you will only hand the discipline of them to the furious or to the impostors. We know today that it was the fanatical mendicants, belonging to the secret associations, sort of irregular and ignorant clergy, who enflamed the mind of the population in the last insurrection, and

---

brought the war [of *Bou Maza* in 1844-1845]. “*Rapports sur L’Algérie 1847*” in Oeuvre I, 815-816 and note 1, 1541.

<sup>49</sup> Letter, February 1, 1837, in OC XIII, 446. See Tocqueville and England, 12.

<sup>50</sup> DA, II, 1, 2, 409/521.

<sup>51</sup> Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, Books I and II, ed. Kenneth B. Murdock with the assistance of Elizabeth W. Miller, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), 224. See also DA, I, 1, 2, 42/46.

<sup>52</sup> Letter to Eugène Stoffels, July 24, 1836, in OC V, 432-433.

<sup>53</sup> Letter to Arthur de Gobineau, October 22, 1843, in OC IX, 68. See also “The European Revolution” and Correspondence with Gobineau, 211-212.

<sup>54</sup> Letter to Eugène Stoffels, July 24, 1836, in OC V, 431.

<sup>55</sup> Letter to Claude-Francois (nicknamed Francisque by Tocqueville) de Corcelle, September 17, 1853, in OC XV, 81. See also Tocqueville, Selected Letters, 295.

<sup>56</sup> Antoine Rédier argues that in the preface of Democracy in America, Tocqueville himself uses the terms equality and liberty interchangeably. He explains there is indeed a common point between the two if they are examined from the perspective of Christianity, which in making all men equal, made them free one from the other. However, Tocqueville knows too well that it is a false proposition to assume that a democratic man is a free man. Comme disait Monsieur de Tocqueville, 93-96.

<sup>57</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, “Etat social et politique de la France avant et depuis 1789” in AR, I, 62-63. (The English text is not cited because the essay is not included in the English translation).

<sup>58</sup> OR/AR, I, 3, 4, 217/217.

---

<sup>59</sup> Tocqueville, Selected Letters, 350.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### **MONTESQUIEU'S INFLUENCE ON TOCQUEVILLE'S RELIGIOUS TEACHING: HOW TOCQUEVILLE CAME TO IDENTIFY AMERICAN BELIEFS WITH A MODIFIED REPUBLICAN VIRTUE**

The objective of this chapter is to show that Tocqueville's religious doctrine as it is articulated in the first volume of Democracy in America is primarily an adaptation of America's unique system of beliefs to Montesquieu's framework of principles to explain the soul of the American democratic regime. America provides Tocqueville a fertile ground in which to test Montesquieu's theories because it is a federation of democratic republics that combines various political characteristics identified by Montesquieu as proper to this type of regime including, *inter alia*, democracy's love of equality and republican virtue. Moreover, America has the rare distinction of having inherited the characteristics Montesquieu asserts are proper only to England: a spirit of liberty; a commercial spirit; and a spirit of religion. Montesquieu's theoretical structure allows Tocqueville to explain how despite apparent "indifference to [religious dogmas]," Anglo-Americans produced nonetheless a morally ordered democracy.<sup>1</sup> By drawing on his knowledge of Montesquieu he is able to explain the American religious phenomenon, which combines an equal fervor for material well-being and systematic piety.

More specifically, the chapter will argue that Montesquieu illuminates for Tocqueville how the moral values of Americans are a synthesis of religious practice, republican ethics, and commercial habits bred by a tradition of liberty inherited from England. This perspective enables him to show that the American religious spirit stems less from dogmatic convictions than from habits developed to inculcate moral order in society to facilitate the parallel objectives of commerce and the republic. Thus, in

following Montesquieu, Tocqueville is able to show that the Anglo-American commercial spirit breeds an enlightened self-interest that functions as a substitute for virtue insofar as it contributes to the well-being of the republic. In fact, the Americans of the nineteenth century exemplified for Tocqueville what Montesquieu before him had concluded: an egalitarian republic produces neither great vices nor heroic virtues but mores that produce well-ordered mediocrity.<sup>2</sup> In short, the chapter demonstrates that Tocqueville's conclusion about the status of religion in the American republic at the end of the first volume is less a blanket articulation of his religious doctrine than that of a systemization of the common principles that constitutes the unique beliefs of Anglo-Americans.

Tocqueville's political philosophy with its emphasis on morality is partially structured on Montesquieu's determination that virtue is the principle of democracy, i.e., the nourishing spring most necessary to its survivability,<sup>3</sup> although it is Rousseau who ultimately helps him to identify the modern democratic character and the means by which to instill it with virtue, a subject that will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter. Nevertheless, this chapter aims to show that Tocqueville adduces Rousseau's concept of sovereignty embodied in America's township government to illustrate that Montesquieu's emphasis on making virtue the object of education in a democratic republican regime<sup>4</sup> remains valid for modern democracy, with the caveat that modern democratic virtue requires a moral component that religion alone provides. Thus, with this stipulation Tocqueville modifies Montesquieu's teaching to accommodate the needs of modern democracy. His visit to America gave empirical evidence to Tocqueville that a republican government more than any other needs what Montesquieu refers to as the



power of education because “political virtue is a renunciation of oneself, which is always a very painful thing.”<sup>5</sup>

A digression is in order here to recapitulate Tocqueville’s concept of virtue. It is important to recall that Tocqueville associates virtue with liberty, more specifically liberty of conscience to obey moral law which makes political liberty possible; it is only between these two poles that a balance between duties and rights respectively can be found within the modern democratic state. For Tocqueville liberty is possible only when man exercises moral responsibility, which he learns from religion. “Liberty is in truth a sacred thing. Only one other thing is more worthy of the name: virtue. And what is virtue, if not free choice of what is good?”<sup>6</sup>

It is his determination to interlace liberty with religion and morality that causes Tocqueville to call for “a new political science...for a world altogether new”<sup>7</sup> and to define himself as a “liberal of a new kind,” to differentiate himself from other liberals. Classical liberalism, with its emphasis on the political and economic rights of the individual, tends to promote in Tocqueville’s view a disheartening indifference to the civic virtue that contributed to the greatness of the ancient republics Montesquieu studied. Classical liberalism encourages the devaluation of political virtue by privileging individual rights that favor material well-being over civic duty. It displaces virtue insofar as it presumes that individual happiness takes precedence over the duties of citizenship thereby creating a moral vacuum in which the individual is left politically and intellectually too isolated to secure his liberty.

Tocqueville's "new liberalism" is as much a product of his Catholic upbringing as that of his aristocratic heritage insofar as it places respectively as much emphasis on the individual's equal right to liberty as on the citizen's moral duty to procure it. In this respect he conceives political virtue as a religious duty in an age in which it does not emanate from aristocratic honor. Put another way he believes political freedom in democracy is attainable only through moral freedom. He wants to correct classical liberalism by infusing it with the religious morality that makes political freedom possible under a system of equality.

In sum, his liberalism places great emphasis on religion because he believes that in the absence of an aristocratic corps to "maintain the human mind in faith"<sup>8</sup> and manage public affairs<sup>9</sup> religion should extend its field of moral inculcation to include public duties as well as private ones. He finds one great weakness in Christianity's otherwise admirable moral foundation- that of neglecting to emphasize in the Church's teaching the importance of public virtues. "The duties of men to one another as citizens, the citizen's obligations to the fatherland, seem to me poorly defined and relatively neglected in Christian ethics. That, it seems to me, is the weak point of that admirable moral system, just as it was the only really strong point of ancient morality."<sup>10</sup> This gross oversight is all the more worrisome in the new age of democracy for the reason stated above. The lack of emphasis on public morality in the Church's teaching continues to preoccupy him up until his untimely death at the age of 54 on April 16, 1859 as outlined in the letters below to his friend Sophie Swetchine dated September 10, 1856 and October 20, 1856 respectively.

There are, it seems to me, two distinct parts to morality, each of which is as important as the other in the eyes of God, but which in our days, His ministers teach us with a very unequal ardor. The one relates to private life: these are the relative duties of people as fathers, as sons, as wives or husbands... (the dots appear in the text) The other concerns public life: these are the duties that every citizen has toward his country and the human society to which he belongs. Am I mistaken in believing that the clergy of our time is very occupied with the first portion of morality and very little occupied with the second? That seems to me especially apparent in the way in which women feel and think. I see a great number of them who have a thousand private virtues in which the direct and beneficial action of religion is to be perceived; who, thanks to it, are very faithful wives, excellent mothers; who show themselves to be indulgent toward their servants, charitable toward the poor... (the dots appear in the text) But as to that part of duties that is related to public life, they do not seem to have the least idea. Not only do they not practice them for themselves, which is natural enough, but they do not seem even to have any thought of inculcating them in those on whom they have influence. That is an aspect of education that is as if it were invisible to them. It was not like this under the Old Regime, which, amidst many vices, included proud and manly virtues. I have often heard it said that my grandmother, who was a very saintly woman, after having recommended to her young son the exercise of all the duties of private life, did not fail to

add: “And then, my child, never forget that a man above all owes himself to his homeland; that there is no sacrifice that he must not make for it; that he cannot rest indifferent to its fate, and that God demands of him that he always be ready to consecrate, if need be, his time, his fortune, and even his life to the service of the state and of the king.”<sup>11</sup>

It is noteworthy that the exchange of letters between Tocqueville and Madame Swetchine cited in this section focus on Madame Swetchine’s interpretation of L’Ancien régime et la révolution, which had just been published on June 16, 1856. Madame Swetchine praised the book but challenged Tocqueville on two points of extreme importance to him: religion and liberty. Madame Swetchine not only disagreed with Tocqueville on the role of public education he wants to assign to the Church but also for exalting feudal and aristocratic liberty in his work. With respect to the first, Madame Swetchine affirms that the Catholic Church would compromise her mission, which is the revelation of divine truth, if she undertook to put herself under the exclusive service of any regime. Moreover, she argues that feudalism is the most reprehensible political system because the greatness it produced was limited to one class. The only conceivable liberty for her is one that can be counted among the goods that God has equally given to all his creatures, including youth, strength, health, intelligence, etc.

Tocqueville responds to her criticism by stating that he shares her noble views about everything that resembles slavery<sup>12</sup> and that in praising aristocratic liberty he only wants to emphasize the importance to democracy of making sure that political equality does not become synonymous with the equal subjection of all to one master. He provides

her a clarification of his views in a subsequent letter about the specific role he would like the Church to take in fulfilling the crucially important undertaking of educating citizens.

I am not asking priests to make it a duty of conscience for the men whose education is confided to them or on whom they exercise an influence that they be favorable to the republic or the monarchy.

However, I admit that I would like them to say more often that at the same time that they are Christians they belong to one of these great human associations that God has established without doubt to attach individuals one to another, associations that are called nations and whose territory is called the homeland. I would desire that they cause to penetrate further in men's souls that each owes himself to this collective being before belonging to himself. That with regard to this being, it is not permitted to fall into indifference, even less so to make of this indifference a sort of soft virtue which enervates some of the most noble instincts that have been given to us; that all are responsible for what happens to it; and that all, depending on their lights, are held to work constantly for its prosperity and to guard over it so that they are only submitted to beneficent, respectable and legitimate authorities.<sup>13</sup>

The foregoing letters clarify the considerations that fuel Tocqueville's desire to appeal to religion to inspire patriotism in democracy. In the absence of the manly spirit that was the foundation of this noble virtue in aristocracy, he wants the Church to instill in citizens the idea that devotion to their homeland is as much an important part of their moral duty as any other. By giving patriotism divine sanction he hopes to awaken the

democratic citizen to the importance of civic virtue, which in his view is the best corrective to the inherent propensity of modern democracy to stifle liberty.

It is incontrovertible for Tocqueville that liberalism's exaltation of individual rights and its tendency to privilege private interest over public good has displaced political virtue. Liberal individualism emphasizes less obedience to moral law than obedience to a selfish passion for material well-being. It is the same thing as egoism, which has always existed, but because it permeates democratic society it leads to dreadful consequences for the body politic. It must be corrected lest it leads the individual down a path straight to servitude. The isolation it encourages makes the individual weak, powerless and disposes citizens, who prize private tranquility above all else, to surrender their liberty to the first self-proclaimed shepherd who they believe will secure it for them.<sup>14</sup>

Tocqueville believes a moral education that emphasizes the citizen's duties is of the utmost necessity in an egalitarian state, especially in France where the absence of institutions to promote public virtue combined with the democratic instinct to focus solely on one's personal interest have made equality alternatively synonymous with anarchy and despotism. A moral education founded on the same immutable law must direct individual action to bind citizens to one another by a sense of moral duty. A religious based morality is much more necessary in the democratic state because men are no longer bound each to the other by the reciprocal duties that existed under the immobile class structure of aristocratic hierarchy. Therefore, in a democratic republic the laws of education and those of the legislator must be premised on moral principles that promote virtue.<sup>15</sup>

Tocqueville discovered during his sojourn in the United States that the Americans had found an effective way to combat the democratic tendency to surrender to a selfish individualism.

But when I came to examine attentively the state of society, I discovered without difficulty that Americans had made great and fortunate efforts to combat these weaknesses of the human heart and to correct these natural defects of democracy...

It seemed to me that American legislators had come, not without success, to oppose the idea of rights to sentiments of envy; to the continuous movements of the political world, the immobility of religious morality; the experience of the people, to its theoretical ignorance, and its habit of business, to the enthusiasm of its desires.<sup>16</sup>

Tocqueville returns to this theme again in the second volume of Democracy in America to reiterate the responsibility legislators have in promoting virtue by means of religion.

Legislators of democracies and all honest and enlightened men who live in them must therefore apply themselves relentlessly to raising up souls and keeping them turned toward Heaven. It is necessary for all those who are interested in the future of democratic societies to unite, and for all in concert to make continuous efforts to spread within these societies a taste for the infinite, a sentiment of greatness, and a love of immaterial pleasures.<sup>17</sup>

Tocqueville emphasizes the need to impregnate modern democratic virtue with a moral component because America presents for him evidence of its positive effect on the modern democratic character: in America religion and interest create a moral hybrid that accommodates the modern democratic instinct. This American phenomenon causes him to concede soon upon his arrival in New York from France on May 10, 1831 that a different moral tenet has replaced in this country the one that animated the republics of antiquity. The principle of subordinating private interests to the general good that maintained the ancient republics and in that sense made them virtuous was not the one operative in the American republic. Already on May 29, 1831 he was writing the following in his travel notebook.

The principle of this one [America] seems to be to make private interests harmonize with the general interest. A sort of refined and intelligent selfishness seems to be the pivot on which the whole machine turns. These people here do not trouble themselves to find out whether public virtue is good, but they do claim to prove that it is useful. If the latter point is true, as I think it is in part, this society can pass as enlightened, but not as virtuous. But up to what extent can the two principles of individual well-being and the general good in fact be merged? How far can a conscience, which one might say was based on reflection and calculation, master those political passions which are not yet born, but which certainly will be born? That is something which only the future will show.



When one reflects on the nature of this society here, one sees to some extent the explanation of what I have just written; American society is composed of a thousand different elements recently assembled.

The men who live under its laws are still English, French, German and Dutch. They have neither religion, morals, nor ideas in common; up to the present one cannot say that there is an American character, at least unless it is the very fact of not having any. There is no common memory, no national attachments here. What then can be the only bond that unites the different parts of the body? *Interest*.<sup>18</sup>

Can private interests alone dispel the political passions that destroy liberty?

Tocqueville answers this question a few months later by modifying Montesquieu's claim that virtue is the principle that maintains republics. An entry in his travel notebook dated November 30, 1831 shows an adjustment to reflect the new perspective he gains from observing American democracy.

Another point that America demonstrates is that virtue is not, as has long been claimed, the only thing that maintains republics, but that enlightenment, more than any other thing, makes this social condition easy. The Americans are scarcely more virtuous than others; but they are infinitely more enlightened (I speak of the masses) than any other people I know; I do not only want to say that there are more people there who know how to read and write (a matter to which perhaps more importance is attached than is due), but the body of people who have understanding of public affairs, knowledge of the laws and of precedents, feeling for the

well-understood interests of the nation and the faculty to understand them, is greater there than in any other place in the world.<sup>19</sup>

America forces Tocqueville to reframe the lessons on republican principle taught by Montesquieu, viz., that the virtue of a republic is simply love of the republic.<sup>20</sup> He finds that the ancient republican virtue Montesquieu praises has been replaced in American democracy by an enlightened selfishness that nonetheless produces similar benefits for the republic. The lesson of America brings Tocqueville by a circuitous path to agree with Montesquieu that love of the republic in a democracy is that of the democracy; and the love of the democracy is that of equality.<sup>21</sup> Tocqueville draws on the Anglo-American experience to show that in modern democracy the only way to achieve the result noted by Montesquieu is to “hasten to unite in the eyes of the people individual interest to the interest of the country, for disinterested love of one’s native country is fleeing away without return.”<sup>22</sup>

However, with respect to France he finds that the democratic passion for equality has produced an unenlightened selfishness-- shaped by the circumstances in which equality was established there-- that has destroyed all notions of public spirit. This particular case brings him to disagree partially with Montesquieu who maintains that love of the republic is compatible with love of equality insofar as these two passions conjointly lead each to place the interest of country above his own particular interests. Montesquieu’s study of the ancient democratic republics leads him to this conclusion because love of equality in these states was synonymous with love of frugality, which means that equality was limited to the happiness of striving to surpass other citizens’

ability to make the greatest sacrifices for one's country.<sup>23</sup> In contrast in France love of equality gives rise to class envy and hatred and an all-consuming passion for material well-being that entirely debilitate public virtue.

Despite these modifications, Montesquieu remains an important point of reference for Tocqueville inasmuch as he elucidates for him one of the particular attributes that keeps the American's preoccupation with his private interest from completely debilitating public virtue in this nation. Virtue in America does not emanate from the selfless love of the republic but from the restive commercial spirit that animates a passion for order and regularity of mores,<sup>24</sup> habits that are indispensable to the management of prosperous affairs. The commercial spirit emulates virtue because it is closely linked to the interest of the Americans who "carry the habits of trade into politics."<sup>25</sup>

Commerce softens mores by producing in men a certain sentiment for "exact justice" and wherever it exists mores are sweet because it creates mutual needs that can only be satisfied by virtuous mores,<sup>26</sup> albeit self-interested ones in modern democracies. Adducing England, Montesquieu shows that her propensity to subordinate her political to her commercial interests without adverse political effects shows how well liberty and commerce are suited one to the other.<sup>27</sup> In fact, he asserts that England is the country in the world, which has known best how to value simultaneously these three great things: religion, commerce and liberty.<sup>28</sup>

Once again Tocqueville agrees partly with Montesquieu's assertion that there is a hidden connection between liberty and commerce. However, if for Montesquieu the spirit of commerce naturally engenders in men the spirit of liberty for Tocqueville this relationship is reversed. He believes on the contrary that it is the spirit and habits of

liberty that produce the spirit and habits of commerce. He argues it is the first that generates the second based on his observations of world history, which show that free nations have existed without engaging in commerce whereas all commercial nations have been free.

To be free, one must know how to conceive a difficult undertaking and to persevere in it, to have the habit to act on one's own initiative; to live free, one must habituate oneself to an existence full of agitation and peril; to watch ceaselessly and to keep every minute a watchful eye about oneself: this is the price of liberty. All these things are equally necessary to succeed in commerce.

When I see the direction imparted to the human spirit in England by political life, when I see the Englishman sure of the aid of his laws, relying on himself and seeing no obstacle but in the limit of his own powers, acting without constraint; when I see him animated by the idea that he can do anything, looking incessantly upon the present with anxiety and seeking everywhere the best; when I see him thus, I do not look to see whether nature has carved out ports for him, provided the coal, given the iron. The cause of his commercial prosperity is not there: it is within himself.<sup>29</sup>

Tocqueville's description of the commercial spirit that animates the English is identical to his portrait of the restlessness that drives the Anglo-American's unrelenting search to better his lot. The American displays a "commercial and mercantile spirit"<sup>30</sup> which, like that of the Englishman, is the product of the liberty he enjoys.

Howsoever powerful and impetuous the course of history is here [America], imagination always goes in advance of it, and the picture is never large enough. There is no country in the world where man more confidently takes charge of the future, or where he feels with more pride that he can fashion the universe to please himself. It is a movement of the mind which can only be compared with that which brought about the discovery of the New World three centuries ago. And in fact, one might say that America has been discovered for a second time...[T]he American has no time to attach himself to anything, he is only accustomed to change and ends by looking on it as the natural state of man. Much more, he feels the need of it, he loves it, for instability instead of causing disasters for him, seems only to bring forth wonders around him. (The idea of a possible improvement, of a successive and continuous betterment of the social condition, that idea is ever before him in all its facets).<sup>31</sup>

In Democracy in America, Tocqueville argues that the commercial spirit of Americans is one among the causes that maintain their republics.<sup>32</sup> He describes the American republics “like companies of merchants formed to exploit in common the wilderness lands of the New World, and busy in a commerce that is prospering.”<sup>33</sup> The powerful influence of this spirit on political actions and opinions is rendered memorable by Tocqueville in the following anecdote.

During his stay in America circumstances compelled him to seek refuge one night at the door of a wealthy planter in Pennsylvania. This planter was a Frenchman who Tocqueville recognized by name. This Frenchman happened to be “a great leveler

and an ardent demagogue” who forty years before had been expelled from France for his political opinions. Tocqueville expresses his astonishment at hearing this man discourse on the right of property with the expertise of an economist, extol the necessary hierarchy that fortune establishes among men, obedience to established law, the influence of good mores in republics and the assistance that religious ideas lend to order and freedom. He attributes one cause for the complete change in the man’s judgment and newfound enlightenment: the new well-being he had acquired in America’s vast landscape of commercial opportunities.<sup>34</sup>

**How Montesquieu Illuminates for Tocqueville that the Common Features America Shares with England Contributes to its Democratic Success**

When he published the first volume of Democracy in America in January 1835, Tocqueville’s friend and mentor Pierre-Paul Royer-Collard<sup>35</sup> acknowledged his masterful analysis of democracy in the modern world with the following acclamation: “since Montesquieu there has been nothing like it.”<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Tocqueville uses Montesquieu’s method of identifying the dominant feature that governs a society and constitutes its “general spirit,”<sup>37</sup> to understand the modern democratic regime as he found it in America. Thinking of his native France whose encounter with democracy had coincided with more than thirty years of succeeding revolutions he ponders the means for directing her toward a moral equilibrium between private interests and the public good comparable to that which America has achieved. Montesquieu provides the tools to guide him toward his objective.

Tocqueville not only resorts to Montesquieu to discover how the laws might contribute to shaping the “general spirit” of democracy in France but he also shares his

teacher's interest in England as a comparative model of liberty to be emulated beside America. Tocqueville carried a lifelong fascination with England, which represents for him a closer ideal of the type of government he wanted to see emerge in France's movement toward democracy. England is primarily an aristocratic state that contains a modicum of democratic elements whereas America is completely democratic, the only feature that differentiates it from England. France for its part is an incongruous mixture of England's tradition of social inequality and America's legal equality. Thus, although Tocqueville attributes a greater influence to mores than to laws in the success of American democracy,<sup>38</sup> he recognizes that laws will have to shape mores to establish in France the same tradition of liberty America shares with England.

The most tangible account left by Tocqueville of the vision he had for democracy in France is provided below in letters to Eugène Stoffels, Claude-François de Corcelle and Louis de Kergolay respectively. The letter to Stoffels written on October 5, 1836, about twenty-one months after the publication of the first volume of Democracy in America outlines his political view for France whereas the ones to Corcelle and Kergolay, which follow it, bring into perspective how England epitomizes the vision he had in mind for France.

And what do I want? Let us distinguish, in order to understand each other better, between the end and the means. What is the end? What I want is not a republic, but a hereditary monarchy. I would even prefer it to be legitimate rather than elected like the one we have, because it would be stronger, especially externally. What I want is a central government energetic in its own sphere of action. Energy from the central government

is even more necessary among a democratic people in whom the social force is more diffused than in an aristocracy. Besides our situation in Europe lays down an imperative law for us in what should be a thing of choice. But I wish that this central power had a clearly delineated sphere, that it were involved with what is a necessary part of its functions and not with everything in general, and that it were forever subordinated, in its tendency, to public opinion and to the legislative power that represents this public opinion. I believe that the central power can be invested with very great prerogatives, can be energetic and powerful in its sphere, and that at the same time provincial liberties can be developed...I wish that general principles of government were liberal, that the largest possible part were left to the action of individuals, to personal initiatives. I believe that all these things are compatible; even more, I am profoundly convinced that there will never be order and tranquility except when they are successfully combined.

As for the means: with all those who admit that we must make our way gradually toward this goal, I am very much in accord. I am the first to admit that it is necessary to proceed slowly, with precaution, with legality. My conviction is that our current institutions are sufficient for reaching the result I have in view. Far, then, from wanting to violate the laws, I profess an almost superstitious respect for the laws. But I wish that the laws would tend little and gradually toward the goal I have just indicated, instead of making powerless and dangerous efforts to turn back.



I wish that the government would itself prepare mores and practices so that people would do without it in many cases in which its intervention is still necessary or invoked without necessity...<sup>39</sup>

Tocqueville did not change his perspective, which remained consistent for over twenty years as will be shown presently. His sketch of a government he believed would conform to France's very particular circumstances appears in many respects to be modeled on England's mixture of aristocratic and liberal principles. The letters below written following his second visit to England in June-July 1857, approximately two years before his death, supports this study's view.

On July 29, 1857, he writes to Corcelle:

I have so much to say on England, which I have seen again after twenty years and with a much greater experience of men, that I would need several letters to give an account of the sensations I have received and the ideas that have passed through my mind in the presence of the spectacle I had before my eyes.

It is the greatest spectacle there is in the world, although everything in it is not great...

[W]hat one sees everywhere is the union and understanding that exist among all the men who belong to the enlightened classes, from the beginning of the bourgeoisie to the highest of the aristocracy, for defending the society and freely leading it in common. I do not envy England its riches and its power, but I envy it that; and I took a deep breath on finding myself for the first time in so many years, beyond those

class hatreds and jealousies that, after having been the source of all our miseries, have destroyed our liberty.

England made me feel a second joy of which I have been deprived for a very long time; it made me see a perfect accord between the religious world and the political world, private virtues and public virtues, Christianity and liberty...<sup>40</sup>

And on August 4, 1857 he writes to Kergolay:

You understand well that I did not spend my time in England without looking around in curiosity. I still found England more aristocratic in appearance than the way at least I had left it twenty years ago. The democratic ferment, which at that time had climbed to the surface, has disappeared and all the upper classes appear to get along better to lead in common the affairs than at the period of which I speak. What a grand spectacle, but for a Frenchman who makes a return on himself what a sad spectacle! There is not a single one of my theoretical ideas on the practice of political liberty and on what allows its use to men that did not appear once more to me to be wholly justified by everything that I had under my eyes! The more I penetrated the detail of the manner in which the affairs are conducted, the more these truths seem to me demonstrated; for, it is the way in which the smallest affairs are managed that makes one understand what is going on in the great ones. If one wanted to limit himself to study the English political world from the top he would never understand anything. But to come back to this great

problem of our time: not only does the aristocracy seem more solidly seated than ever, but the nation leaves evidently without a complaint the government in the hands of a very small number of families. Nevertheless and despite this appearance, I believe that the movement that is imperiously pushing all the other nations in an anti-aristocratic direction, carries little by little and slowly England itself. There should be more time than I have to explain to you what makes me believe this. I limit myself to give you my general impression which is that the aristocracy, especially the one which is combined with birth, continues to govern less than before by a dominating force that is its own than by a sort of tacit and voluntary agreement of the other classes which leave it willingly at the head of the affairs, as long as the affairs will be well managed. I believe that great reverses and especially flaws would easily enough make the other classes appear suddenly in the government. It seems to me that such is the sentiment of the clever ones even among the governing class and this sentiment will preserve them undoubtedly for a long time yet from a fall...<sup>41</sup>

England is pivotal to Tocqueville's analysis of democracy not only because like Montesquieu he admires its traditions of liberty and religion but also because he credits these habits, which the Americans inherited from England for the development of a free democracy in this country. His solution for France lies somewhere between the social harmony England manages to maintain in its march toward democracy and the

achievement of the Americans who have made these English habits the pillars of democracy.

Throughout his commentary, Tocqueville maintains that the Anglo-American national character shows a disposition to value concurrently religion, commerce and liberty, the same characteristics Montesquieu previously attributed to the English. He also notes that all of these things unite to form the general spirit manifested in the mores and institutions of the Anglo-Americans. These observations lead him to trace the generative cause that allows the Anglo-Americans to enjoy a well-ordered democratic state to their Puritan founding. The Puritans brought with them from England not only their religious fervor and desire for complete freedom but also the general features of their social and political English ancestry. Tocqueville provides a succinct account of the Anglo-Americans' origin in Volume I, Part I, Chapter 2 of Democracy in America titled "On the Point of Departure and its Importance to the Future of the Americans." He remarks on the incomparable advantage America offers for the study of democracy insofar as it combines a system of complete equality with the English traditions the Puritans brought with them to the New World. Thereafter, Tocqueville states that the "present chapter contains the seed of what is to follow and the key to almost the whole work."<sup>42</sup>

The importance of the connection between America and England is underscored for Tocqueville when he compares the prosperity of America to the paltry success of her neighbors in Canada and South America. How is one to explain that all three share the same territorial advantages with such contrasting results?<sup>43</sup> He attributes the cause of this difference to the laws and mores of the Anglo-Americans.<sup>44</sup> The "general spirit" of

liberty embedded in the mores, institutions and system of common laws America inherited from England allows it to exploit to its advantage the vast inexhaustible resources of the New World. Placed in the midst of the wilderness with no external enemies to combat the Anglo-American is able to satisfy the unique passion of his life—that of making a fortune. The unlimited opportunities available to him combined with his characteristic independence produce in him an obsessive industrious and commercial spirit that has a positive impact on politics insofar as it nourishes and occupies passions that elsewhere men employ to withdraw from or disturb society.

The French Canadian exemplifies the first tendency by displaying complacency with his lot reminiscent of the French peasant's lack of initiative, the result of centuries of subjection to the paternalistic yoke of administrative centralization, which for Tocqueville is very different from government centralization.<sup>45</sup> Unlike the Anglo-American, the mores he brought with him to the New World prevent him from exploiting the vast wilderness of the American continent. He prefers to confine himself within a narrow space instead of taking over the still free land at the price of a few days of work. "In France, one regards simplicity of taste, tranquility of mores, the spirit of family, and love of one's birthplace as great guarantees of tranquility and happiness for the state; but in America, nothing appears more prejudicial to society than virtues like these. The French of Canada, who have faithfully preserved the traditions of old mores, already have difficulty in living on their territory, and this small people, which has just been born, will soon be prey to the miseries of old nations."<sup>46</sup>

For his part, the South American exhibits the second inclination by living in chaos and disorder, totally incapable of making the most of the wealth and opportunities

Providence has put at his disposal because he is “obstinately attached to tearing out [his compatriot’s] entrails.”<sup>47</sup> Although the Spanish of South America enjoy the same geographical isolation as the Anglo-Americans, they, nonetheless, put all their resources into maintaining armies. “They [make] war among themselves when foreigners [are] lacking.”<sup>48</sup>

It is unquestionable for Tocqueville that without the high civilization the Anglo-Americans inherited from England and the education they derive from their republican institutions, the special material advantages of the United States would not be enough to produce its wide-ranging prosperity and peaceful democracy. He does not deny that the American republic derives great benefits from its geographical situation on a rich and boundless continent. Nevertheless, Tocqueville shows cogently by the foregoing comparisons that America’s superior achievements are primarily the result of the Anglo-American’s moral and intellectual qualities, the restiveness of spirit that drives him to brave all dangers and miseries to seek his fortune, and the extreme love of independence that allows him to satisfy his immoderate desire for wealth. In sum, the commercial passions he shares with his English forebears occupy the Anglo-American so completely that they turn him from any desire to indulge political passions. He knows that prosperity needs order and since the richness of the land allows all needs to be satisfied without trouble he finds it in his interest to concern himself with the public affairs of his locality and nation, which are intimately tied to his own.

The primary objective then of Tocqueville in the first volume of Democracy in America is to demonstrate to his countrymen that democracy is compatible with order if the requisite institutions are put in place to encourage the development of orderly mores.

America's geographical advantages contribute to the success of her democracy but are not the cause of it. Rather it is her mores and the practical political education the Americans obtain from their free institutions to reinforce these mores that is the cause of her success. Tocqueville stresses the importance of this revelation for him. "It is this truth in which I firmly believe, that inspires in me the only hope I have for the future happiness of Europe."<sup>49</sup> He is convinced that the right political institutions over time could modify the mores of the French to allow them to enjoy an ordered democratic state, although he recognizes the sequence was reversed in America where mores shaped political institutions and laws that are favorable to liberty. Nevertheless, Tocqueville's hortatory message to his countrymen has one main objective: to state his belief that America teaches democracy can be regulated with the aid of political institutions and mores that favor liberty.

In America free mores have made free political institutions; in France it is for free political institutions to mould mores. That is the end to which we must strive but without forgetting the point of departure... Every religious doctrine has a political doctrine which, by affinity, is attached to it. It is an incontestable point in the sense, where nothing runs contrary to that tendency, it is sure to show itself. But it does not follow that it is impossible to separate religious doctrines from all their political effects.<sup>50</sup>

Tocqueville is convinced that liberty flourishes in America because the institutions that maintain democracy here take their orientation from two intellectual traditions: republicanism and Protestantism. These two beliefs are greatly compatible

with liberty insofar as both appeal to human reason as the most reliable guide to political and moral action respectively. Republicanism fosters political liberty because it is premised on the view that his reason makes the individual the best judge of his interest whereas Protestantism promotes moral liberty inasmuch as it teaches that God has put within the reach of every man the means to find the path to Heaven. In relying on the sovereign capacity of the individual's intelligence both traditions make it possible for political society and religious society to be governed by means of democracy without endangering liberty.

The compatibility of republicanism and Protestantism had been previously noted by Montesquieu who argued that Protestantism appealed to the spirit of independence and liberty that characterize the northern countries' preference for republicanism whereas those of the south who were accustomed to the rule of a visible ruler remained Catholic, the religion most suited to monarchy inasmuch as both subject men to an authority.<sup>51</sup> Tocqueville agrees with Montesquieu that there is an affinity between the religion a people adopts and their form of government, however he disagrees with him that Catholicism is not suited to a democratic republic. Tocqueville is careful to de-emphasize Montesquieu's generalization about the congruity of Protestantism and republicanism by maintaining that their harmony in America is due primarily to the fortuitous circumstances in which democracy was established here insofar as the Puritans were motivated by a need to practice their religion in freedom.

In fact, Tocqueville goes to great length to show that the independence Protestantism encourages is ill-suited to democracy and to insist that they harmonize in America because "Americans so completely confuse Christianity and freedom in their



minds that it is almost impossible to have them conceive of the one without the other.”<sup>52</sup>

He affirms that among all the Christian dogmas Catholicism is more favorable to equality of conditions because it makes the same demands on everyone and does not differentiate among men despite the natural, social and economic inequalities that inevitably create barriers among them.

Tocqueville for reasons that should be obvious to the reader by now, viz., that Catholicism is not only the religion he professes but also is the established religion of France, wants to show that Catholic dogmatic uniformity is better suited to restrain the excesses of democratic independence in a nation like France, which does not enjoy a tradition of liberty. He argues that unlike Protestantism, which emphasizes independence, Catholicism highlights the equality of men who are all answerable to one authority. Given France’s obsession with equality and her inexperience with self-reliance that is the legacy of administrative centralization, Catholicism is more suited to her needs. “Among Catholics, religious society is composed of only two elements: the priest and the people. The priest alone is raised above the faithful: everything is equal below him. In the matter of dogmas, Catholicism places the same standard on all intellects; it forces the details of the same beliefs on the learned as well as the ignorant, the man of genius as well as the vulgar...”<sup>53</sup>

There is a less obvious reason for Tocqueville’s insistence that Catholicism is the religion most appropriate to democratic people, which he does not specify in Democracy in America but which he addresses in both a letter to Kergolay from America and in his travel notes that is reminiscent of Montesquieu’s view that laws-- both civil and religious-- should conform to the “nature of the climate of a people.”<sup>54</sup> In his letter to

Kergolay and in his travel notes respectively he maintains that the spirit of Protestants is “cold and logical,”<sup>55</sup> and that the Anglo-American has a “cold and rationalist”<sup>56</sup> temperament like that of his English forebears. Thus, by analogy he shows that Protestantism works for America not because it is a democratic republic but because Anglo-Americans share with the English the spirit of “independence fostered by the [northern] climate”<sup>57</sup> that makes Protestantism as well as republicanism attractive to the people of that region. He assesses the American national character by drawing a parallel between its prominent features and those of the English. What emerges from this comparison is that the only characteristic that differentiates the Anglo-Americans from the English is the aristocratic habits of the latter. Otherwise, they are both the same.

The fact is that there are pretty few peoples who can be understood from one end to the other. The special reason that has put the Americans in a state to be understood, is that they have been able to build their social edifice from a clean start.

If it be true that each people has a special character independent of its political interest, just as each man has one independent of his social position, one might say that America gives the most perfect picture, for good and for ill, of the special character of the English race. The American is the Englishman left to himself. The picture follows of what I mean by the English character...(the dots are in the manuscript) All that is brilliant, generous, splendid, and magnificent in the British character, all that is aristocratic and not English.

Spirit coldly burning, serious, tenacious, selfish, cold, frozen imagination, having respect for money, industrious, proud and rationalist.<sup>58</sup>

The Anglo-American's pragmatic character explains for Tocqueville his ability to display an extreme tolerance toward dogmas in general, which allows numerous sects to coexist in the United States without a hint of discord as long as they preach the "platitudes of [Christian] morality."<sup>59</sup> Tocqueville equates this show of tolerance to mere indifference by contrasting it to the approach of the French to religion.

[I]n France those who believe demonstrate their belief by sacrifices of time, effort, and wealth. One senses that they are acting under the sway of a passion that dominates them and for which they have become agents. It is true that alongside these people one finds the kinds of brutes who hold in horror the very name of religion and who do not very easily even distinguish good from evil. Neither of these groups seems to exist here among the bulk of Protestants.<sup>60</sup>

This difference in temperament underscores for Tocqueville that Protestantism would not be suitable to the French. Moreover, he ponders that the Anglo-American's banal approach to religion cannot fail in the long-term to open the human mind to doubt, a consequence that would be disastrous for democracy in the absence of the strong religious habits and tradition of liberty America inherited from England. In fact, he sees evidence of this tendency even in America where those among the working classes who are religious are abandoning the uncertainties of Protestantism for the empire of authority Catholicism offers while the upper ranks of society are more and more given to embrace

a pure Deism. These apostasies divided along class lines reinforce his view that Protestantism cannot fulfill the needs of democratic nations, especially those of the French.

He advocates Catholicism, which he finds more compatible with the French temperament, as the religion most suitable to democratic men who do not have a habit of liberty. Moreover, Catholicism like the *Ancien Régime* subjects the individual to a central authority in the interest of order. He creates a number of dichotomous relationships to distinguish Protestant from Catholics. These binary associations are classified respectively as follows: Protestant: Catholic; rationalist: passionate; tolerant: intolerant; and indifferent: believer. These defining character traits strengthen his belief that the harmony that exists between Protestantism and democracy in this country is not only purely an American phenomenon but also that Protestantism, “which generally brings man less to equality than to independence”<sup>61</sup> can only be a transitional religion for democratic people who need the certainty of beliefs to keep them grounded through the constant changes of democratic life.

Yet, Tocqueville admires the way in which the religious and irreligious instincts in America conform to public opinion by affirming the Christian principles that maintain moral uniformity in society. “If it serves man very much as an individual that his religion be true, this is not so for society. Society has nothing to fear nor to hope from the other life; and what is most important to it is not so much that all citizens profess the true religion but that they profess a religion.”<sup>62</sup> Tocqueville owes this insight to the teachings of the enlightenment articulated by Montesquieu as well as Rousseau. Montesquieu, for whom religion is necessary to society, maintains that even the religions whose premises

are false can contribute to the well-being of society.<sup>63</sup> Likewise, Rousseau asserts: “I regard all the particular religions as so many salutary institutions, which prescribe in each country a uniform manner of honoring God by public worship.”<sup>64</sup>

In sum, Tocqueville follows Montesquieu in the first volume of Democracy in America by affirming that religions must accommodate the social and political state if they are to exert any moral influence on believers, albeit by adjusting his teaching to meet the demands of modern democracy. He believes religion must take care to avoid any collision with the generally accepted ideas and permanent interests that reign in common opinion, which in the case of modern democracy emphasize a passion for equality. Consequently, he underscores that there are special circumstances that make Protestantism compatible with democracy in America even though he believes Catholicism is the religion most suitable for democracy, particularly democracy in France. In tracing the evolution of his thought to Montesquieu to settle this question this study may have suggested that he embraces a fatalistic view of history, a charge that has been previously leveled against him. In order to dispel any doubt that this was the aim of the foregoing analysis this section will end with a digression from its main objective.

This study adduces the associations Tocqueville makes among religious choice, national character, and social class not to imply that there is a tendency in him to embrace a fatalistic view of history but rather to point to an affinity between Montesquieu’s theories on diverse subjects and Tocqueville’s analysis of modern democracy as he found it in America, which he uses as a base to seek a solution that would allow democracy eventually to flourish in liberty in France. His perspective of democracy from the

opposed realities of America and France forces him to compare all the elements that mold the particular habits and character of the Anglo-Americans and that of the French to discover how to replicate in his native land the harmony between liberty and equality he found here by taking national traits into consideration. Fatalism is completely antithetical to the principles Tocqueville espouse as is attested by his rebuke of his protégé Arthur de Gobineau's racial theories.

I admit that I could not believe how you could fail to see the difficulty of reconciling your scientific theories with the letter and with the spirit of Christianity. About the letter: what is clearer in Genesis than the unity of the human race and the descent of all men from the same ancestor? About the spirit: is it not its unique trait to have abolished those racial distinctions which the Jewish religion still retained and to have made therefrom but one human race, all of whose members are equally capable of improving and uniting themselves? How can this spirit- and I am trying to use plain common sense- be reconciled with a doctrine that makes races distinct and unequal, with differing capacities of understanding, of judgment, of action, due to some original and immutable disposition which invisibly denies the possibility of improvement for certain peoples? Evidently Christianity wishes to make all men brothers and equals. Your doctrine makes them cousins at best whose common father is very far away in the heavens; to you down here there are only victors and vanquished, masters and slaves, due to their birthrights. This is obvious since your doctrines are being approved, cited, commented

upon by whom? By slaveowners and by those who favor the perpetuation of slavery on the basis of radical differences of race.<sup>65</sup>

Marvin Zetterbaum argues forcefully that Tocqueville's own inevitability thesis and conception of the progress of democracy as a providential fact is fatalistic "at least as [it] is formulated in the introduction of Democracy in America and reaffirmed in the Old Regime."<sup>66</sup> However, this study differs with his interpretation on the basis that a fatalistic conception of history is contrary to Tocqueville's belief in the principles of human liberty and perfectibility and Christian morality that are so central to his teaching. Furthermore, he rejects Gobineau's materialist doctrines because he is keenly aware of the intellectual's moral responsibility to guard from propagating a conception of history that enfolds deleterious consequences for society. It is more to the point to argue that Tocqueville's appeal to Providence is a rhetorical device employed to lend legitimacy to democracy and re-establish credibility for religion in France, which he believes is essential to the success of democracy in that country. Another likely interpretation of the inevitability thesis is that of Jean-Claude Lamberti who argues that Tocqueville's intellectual outlook is closer to a willingness to entertain deterministic theories.<sup>67</sup> As the foregoing discussion on national characteristics and religion shows, his view coincides more with the deterministic thesis insofar as he accepts that historical facts are governed by what Montesquieu identified as the "nature of climates."<sup>68</sup> Here is how Tocqueville explains it to his friend Gustave de Beaumont in a letter in which he discusses Gobineau's racial doctrines.

Gobineau has just sent me a thick book, full of research and talent, in which he endeavors to prove that everything that takes place in the

world may be explained by differences of race, system of a horse dealer rather than that of a statesman; I do not believe a word of it. And yet, I think that there is in every nation, whether in consequence of race or of an education which has lasted for centuries, some peculiarity, tenacious if not permanent, which combines itself with all the events that befall it, and is seen across all its fortunes, in every period of its history.<sup>69</sup>

Another example of his deterministic view of history is found in Democracy in America in the chapter in which he describes the American continent by asserting that its physical appearance and climate suggest that North America “had been created to become the domain of the intellect.” In contrast, those of South America and the West Indies suggest that it “was to be the dwelling of the senses.”<sup>70</sup> These statements are deterministic insofar as they are intended to show how climate influences men’s propensities; they are meant to show that a cause, climate, produces particular effects on men. It is noteworthy that when determinism leads to immoral practices Tocqueville forthrightly rejects to entertain its claims. This is evident when he discusses climate in the context of the pernicious practice of slavery in the American South. Tocqueville rejects the assertion that the tropical climate makes work fatal to the European in that region and thus makes slavery necessary since the Negro submits to work there without danger. He compares the climate of the American South with that of Spain and Italy to show that work is no more fatal to the Spaniards and Italians than it would be to the Americans of the South to refute those who advocate slavery.<sup>71</sup>

In short, Tocqueville’s indignation against fatalistic doctrines is so strong that he chooses to conclude Democracy in America by underscoring the power he attributes to



free will in shaping individuals and nations. “Providence has not created the human race either entirely independent or perfectly slave. It traces, it is true, a fatal circle around each man that he cannot leave; but within its vast limits man is powerful and free; so too with peoples.”<sup>72</sup>

### **How Tocqueville Came to Proclaim that Religion is the Preeminent Political Institution of Modern Democracy**

Tocqueville’s commentary on American democracy provides him the means through which to discuss the institutional changes from which French democracy would benefit. Thus, it contains both praise and criticism for American institutions. As to be expected he praises the institutional practices that would aid France toward an orderly democracy and criticizes those that would encourage her propensity to accommodate the worse tendencies of democracy.

Tocqueville maintains that the religious reverence Americans have for their republican institutions is the primary cause for the pervasive public spiritedness to be found in this country. He places the origin of all powers in the will of the majority and recognizes its strong influence over the enforcement of moral order. Nevertheless, he denounces the omnipotence of the majority in America for its potential to tyrannize minorities and ostracize anyone who challenges its will. He is also concerned that the mutability of America’s secondary laws might eventually jeopardize the stability of the country’s fundamental law. However, he does not find these democratic liabilities overly alarming for America where the first is tempered by the absence of administrative centralization while the second has a powerful counterbalance in religion, which the majority employs to restrain any licentiousness it deems harmful to republican beliefs.

It is worthwhile to recall here that Tocqueville begins his study of American democracy in the tradition of Montesquieu by looking for its generative principle. After careful observations and numerous conversation and interviews with prominent citizens during his American sojourn he discovers as it has already been noted that it is not virtue *per se* but enlightenment that drives the American political machine. Therefore, it is useful to anyone who wishes to apply the valuable lessons he teaches about democracy to follow him through the steps that lead him to this innovative political principle, which differentiates itself from Montesquieu's concept of classical virtue insofar as it incorporates a moral element.

The first volume of Democracy in America in great part recasts the observations and conversations, which are recorded in Tocqueville's American travel notes and his letters to France from America, that bring him to proclaim the need for a new political science. Tocqueville tirelessly questioned his American hosts to understand the spirit that gives American democracy its impulse for freedom and then submitted to assiduous meditations all that he learned from them before he proceeded to formulate a philosophical framework for modern democracy. This method allowed him to perceive that the American republics had to be judged by a different standard than the one Montesquieu used to evaluate the ancient Greek and Roman republics. The "enlightened people who inhabit [the American republics]" could not be compared to the "coarse populace" of the ancient republics. "New ideas [had to be applied] to a social state so new"<sup>73</sup> and the identification of enlightenment as the most obvious cause for the moral order prevailing in the American democratic republic was for Tocqueville an important step toward that objective.

During his stay in Boston, Tocqueville had the opportunity to consult with a number of prominent citizens including, *inter alia*, university president of Cambridge Josiah Quincy, Jr., Massachusetts State Senator Francis Calley Gray, the exiled German liberal Francis Lieber best known for his *Encyclopaedia Americana*, the diplomat Alexander Everett, the Georgian planter Henry Clay, former President John Quincy Adams and Reverend Jared Sparks, the learned New England historian.<sup>74</sup> Tocqueville continued to cultivate his relationship with these eminent Americans until the end of his life as attests his intermittent correspondence with them across the Atlantic.<sup>75</sup>

Tocqueville learned from them the interconnectedness and workings of the essential organs of American democracy, which draws its vitality and orderly taste for freedom both from Puritan ethics and political principles. Puritanism as Tocqueville explains in Democracy in America “was not only a religious doctrine; it also blended at several points with the most absolute democratic and republican theories.”<sup>76</sup> The Puritans’ first political act was to constitute themselves into a social body structured on the English habit of township government and with it the dogma of the sovereignty of the people. These two political principles are favorable to freedom insofar as the first encourages participation in public affairs inasmuch as it brings men to see the mutual advantage they have in combining their efforts to prosper while the latter encourages respect for law insofar as it is an expression of the general will of the people. Tocqueville is clearly indebted to Rousseau for his understanding of the importance of this last principle to freedom, which is outlined in The Social Contract.<sup>77</sup> In short, he credits these political institutions for the American’s enlightened view of the mutual connection between his self-interest and his freedom.

Mr. Sparks identified for Tocqueville the communal spirit of the Americans, which he attributed to the republican and religious enthusiasm of these settlers who organized the principle of universal representation as soon as they landed in New England, “the cradle of American democracy.”<sup>78</sup> He described for Tocqueville in an essay titled “On the Government of Towns in Massachusetts” how this principle of republicanism established by New England is the foundation of American republican institutions. The essay is a modified blueprint of Rousseau’s Social Contract insofar as it outlines how the first settlers who arrived at Plymouth abandoned the state of nature wherein they found themselves by agreeing upon a system of social and political regulations based on the principles of the equal rights of each individual and the power of the majority to control the whole. This mode of government was replicated as new settlements were established each as an independent republic. It is thus that Tocqueville learned the large modern republic he came to study was in reality a union of small republics, albeit ones which shared common traditions and interests. Incidentally, the model of the early American republics he provides in Democracy in America corresponds greatly with the facts provided by Mr. Sparks on New England as they are recorded in his travel journal.

As Tocqueville’s American education progressed it became increasingly apparent to him that the pulse of the American republic emanates from township life. Through his engagement in township life the Anglo-American learns the art of self-government and the reciprocal relations between duties and rights that are the foundation of moral and political freedom respectively. The Americans derive their understanding of public affairs, knowledge of the laws, and notion for the well-understood interests of the nation,

which are invariably tied to their own, from their municipal institutions. Tocqueville praises the institution of the township for placing freedom within the reach of the people “by mak[ing] them taste its peaceful employ and habituate them to making use of it. Without the institutions of a township a nation can give itself a free government, but it does not have the spirit of freedom.”<sup>79</sup>

The Anglo-American citizen acquires the habit of settling all differences through discussion and proceeding by means of majorities from municipal institutions. Tocqueville was particularly interested in this aspect of American democracy whose superiority over French administrative centralization is palpable insofar as it is a wonderful school of self-government, one that has contributed greatly to make America the nation with the most advanced practical political education in the modern world.<sup>80</sup>

Everywhere he looked in America, government was absent; the dogma of the sovereignty of the people that emanated from the township government of the Puritans was in evidence in the entire political system of the Anglo-Americans. Unlike France where government meddled in every detail of social life, he found here that the people managed their own affairs and followed their own initiatives to make social improvements without having recourse to the authorities. If a new school, hospital or road were needed, the individual who conceived the idea announced his plan, offered to manage it and called on his fellow compatriots to lend their support to the project.

Tocqueville emphasizes repeatedly the significant impact this principle of popular sovereignty has on the moral and political character of a nation. “Each man learns to think and to act for himself without counting on the support of any outside power which, however watchful it may be, can never answer all the needs of man in society. The man

thus used to seeking his well-being by his own efforts alone stands the higher in his own esteem as well as in that of others; he grows stronger and greater of soul.”<sup>81</sup> The self-reliance of the American and his readiness to associate with his fellow citizens to accomplish any objective he deems beneficial to his community and thus himself are direct consequences of the republican spirit that permeates every aspect of social life.

Participation in township life gives practical meaning to the dogma of the sovereignty of the people and constitutes the primary source of political enlightenment insofar as it teaches that the interest of each is tied to the interests of all. Tocqueville adduces the institution of the jury as a powerful and direct application of this dogma inasmuch as it makes the people the ultimate judge of everything that is allowed and forbidden in society and thus makes it the locus of moral authority. It is a school where the people not only learn about their rights but also one in which they learn to take responsibility in public affairs and in this way it contributes to their enlightenment at the same time that it militates against the individual egotism democratic equality fosters. In addition, most township laws require the citizen to receive an elementary education whose curriculum generally comprised knowledge of the nation’s history and familiarity of the principal features of the Constitution that governs it as well as the basic doctrines and proofs of religion.

In his conversation with Senator Gray, Tocqueville learned that the truly parliamentary spirit of American political institutions and civic associations are the legacy of the English spirit and an altogether republican religion. As noted earlier the Puritans who founded the New England townships were as committed to their religion as they were to republicanism, both of which are founded on the concept that reason is the

guiding principle of morality and society. Tocqueville affirms in his travel notes that this concept underpins the “two great social principles [that] rule American society [and explain] the laws and habits which govern it.” He enumerates these principles as follows.

1<sup>st</sup>. The majority may be mistaken on some points, but finally it is always right and there is no moral power above it.

2<sup>nd</sup>. Every individual, private person, society, community or nation, is the only lawful judge of its own interest, and, provided it does not harm the interests of others, nobody has the right to interfere.<sup>82</sup>

The Anglo-American citizen learns from participating in his township to discern “clear and practical ideas on the nature of his duties as well as the extent of his rights.”<sup>83</sup> The idea of rights, particularly property rights, are important to freedom because they teach citizens in principle to respect each other’s personal interest lest by not doing so they forfeit their own. Political rights extended to the least of citizens have the same positive effect since to attack those of others means risking violating one’s own. Moreover, they encourage political participation, which is the most effective means for the citizen to safeguard his interest. Tocqueville underscores the importance of the idea of rights to the movement of modern democracy and argues that without it fear becomes the sole alternative available to govern a nation. The principle of rights is essential to the democratic state inasmuch as it is bound “to the personal interest that offers itself as the only immobile point in the human heart.”<sup>84</sup> It carries unimaginable benefits for the body politic insofar as it gives the poor as well as the rich a stake in society and thus provides a powerful incentive even to the have-nots to preserve order.

Tocqueville viewed the question of property rights as being so critical to the health of the fledgling French republic that he addressed it cogently in a speech to the Constituent Assembly on September 12, 1848 to castigate the socialists for treating it as the origin of all the evils in the world.<sup>85</sup> The right to property was for him not only one of the fundamental principles of human liberty but also the crucial safeguard of order and stability in democracy. He invoked the French Revolution and the principles of liberty for which it stood to support his position. He begged his colleagues to recall that the Revolution was not fought to subjugate the nation to the slavish equality of socialism with its false promise of a limitless consumption for all but to establish a free democratic equality, which the abolition of property rights severely jeopardizes.

And property, gentlemen, property! Without doubt the French Revolution waged an energetic and cruel war against a certain number of property owners; but as to the principle itself of private property, she has always respected, honored it, she has placed it in the first rank of its constitutions. No other nation has more magnificently treated it; she has carved it on the frontispiece of its laws.<sup>86</sup>

Likewise, Tocqueville for whom “the most rational government is not that in which all the interested parties take part, but that which the most enlightened and most moral classes of society direct,”<sup>87</sup> nonetheless made the reform of electoral laws<sup>88</sup> along with, *inter alia*, the separation of Church and state and the liberalization of public education, the objectives of his domestic political agenda.<sup>89</sup> His advocacy for electoral reform was grounded in the realistic view that it was a crucial step in



solving the class war that was undermining any sustainable progress toward order in France. He showed his commitment to this endeavor by the way in which he accommodated himself to the provisional government's March 2, 1848 proclamation of universal suffrage (i.e., for all the male population above the age of twenty). Tocqueville recounts in his Recollections how he modestly took his place among the voters ranked in alphabetical order to elect the members of the Constitutional Assembly, of which he became a member. Although he would have preferred a progressive reform of the suffrage laws, he nonetheless accepted as a pragmatic measure the sweeping change instituted by the moderate republicans, who were for him a better alternative to the socialist party that represented the insurgents of the February revolution.

He outlines his adjustment to the new political reality of France in a letter to Paul Clamorgan, his election organizer and public relations manager in his home district of Valognes: "I therefore have the firm expectation that... the majority of the Assembly will be moderate, that it will want the republic because a reasonable man cannot imagine the possibility of anything else today, but that it will want a republic strongly and regularly constituted like that of the United States."<sup>90</sup>

The concept of equal rights is incidentally one area in which Montesquieu has little to teach Tocqueville for the apparent reason that his teacher studied and wrote about the democratic republics of the ancient world where the concept of universal right was unknown. In both Athens and Rome political participation was limited to the few who were counted as citizens in states populated predominantly by slaves, effectively making these democratic republics *de facto* aristocracies. Hence, it is not

Montesquieu but Rousseau who provides the obvious theoretical reference from which Tocqueville surveys this still new phenomenon insofar as Rousseau argues that man agrees to exchange his natural freedom in society for all the rights that serve as the basis of the social contract.<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, Montesquieu addresses the issue of property right and the importance of invariably guaranteeing effectually its protection in the civil laws for the sake of the public good.<sup>92</sup>

Thus, Tocqueville establishes implicitly at the outset that the success of American democracy is owed far more to the political habits the Puritans established in township life than to the Constitutional law that unites the states. Yet, even as he maintains that the Anglo-American democratic republican tradition is foremost one that is instituted to foster freedom, Tocqueville shows nonetheless that civil obedience alone is not enough to sustain freedom. Political freedom is contingent upon the moral obligation to obey a higher authority than the self. He insists that the Anglo-American is able to make judicious use of his freedom not only because the structure of his government allows him to cherish it but because also his mores predispose him to make religion the regulating power to which he submits. Religion facilitates freedom in America insofar as it provides moral guidance to curb the otherwise complete independence democratic institutions promote.

So, therefore, at the same time that law permits the American people to do everything, religion prevents them from conceiving everything and forbids them to dare everything.

Religion, which, among Americans, never mixes directly in the government of society, should therefore be considered as the first of their

political institutions; for if it does not give them the taste for freedom, it singularly facilitates it.

It is also from this point of view that the inhabitants of the United States themselves consider religious beliefs. I do not know if all Americans have faith in their religion- for who can read to the bottom of hearts?- but I am sure that they believe it necessary to the maintenance of republican institutions. This opinion does not belong only to one class of citizens or to one party, but to the entire nation; one finds it in all ranks.<sup>93</sup>

As he is wont to do when he wants to really stress a point, Tocqueville provides an anecdote to explain his assertion that religion facilitates the maintenance of American republican institutions. Tocqueville chooses his tale carefully to drive home one essential point: the Americans are enlightened enough to recognize the interest they have in making religion the guardian of the republic. Thus, he is implicitly stating that religion for the Americans is less an end in itself than a means for preserving their republic.

I saw Americans associating to send priests into the new states of the West to found schools and churches there; they fear that religion will be lost in the midst of the woods, and that the people growing up may not be as free as the one from which it has issued. I encountered wealthy inhabitants of New England who abandoned the land of their birth with the aim of going to lay the foundations of Christianity and freedom by the banks of the Mississippi or on the prairies of Illinois. Thus it is that in the United States religious zeal constantly warms itself at the hearth of patriotism. You think that these men act solely in consideration of the

other life, but you are mistaken: eternity is one of their cares. If you interrogate these missionaries of Christian civilization, you will be altogether surprised to hear them speak so often of the goods of this world, and to find the political where you believe you will only see the religious. “All American republics are in solidarity with one another,” they will say to you; “if the republics of the West fell into anarchy or came under the yoke of despotism, the republican institutions that flourish on the edges of the Atlantic Ocean would be in great peril; we therefore have an interest in the new states’ being religious so they permit us to remain free.”<sup>94</sup>

Unlike France where the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom “have often made war with each other,” the mores of the first Anglo-Americans “combined marvelously these two perfectly distinct elements.”<sup>95</sup> Tocqueville attributes this harmony between politics and religion to the mores of the New England founders who “were at once ardent sectarians and exalted innovators” while at the same time they maintained a strict compliance with religious beliefs. He marvels in Democracy in America that men who had purchased the ability to pursue their religious opinion at the price of the inevitable miseries of exile could devote themselves with almost equal ardor to seek so aggressively material wealth. He finds the key to America’s success in their uncanny ability to keep separate their allegiance to the City of God from the city of men, wherein in the first everything is ordered, “foreseen and decided in advance” whereas in the second everything is “agitated, contested and uncertain.”<sup>96</sup>

Tocqueville’s grasp of the practical benefits America accrues as a result of this clear separation echoes Montesquieu for whom this was theoretically self-evident.

Given his characterization of modern democracy's restless spirit Tocqueville finds empirical proof in America that the logic of disestablishment signaled by Montesquieu is especially necessary in this state to give the citizen an internalized sense of order for the good of society.

One should not enact by divine laws that which should be enacted by human laws, or regulate by human laws that which should be regulated by divine laws.

These two sorts of laws differ as to their origin, as to their object, and as to their nature...

1. The nature of human laws is to be subject to all the accidents that occur and to vary as men's wills change, whereas the nature of the laws of religion is never to vary...

2. There are states in which the laws are nothing, or nothing but a capricious and transitory will of the sovereign. If, in these states, the laws of religion were of the same nature as human laws, the laws of religion would also be nothing; however it is necessary in society for something to be fixed, and religion is that fixed thing...<sup>97</sup>

Tocqueville affirms that the Puritan settler's religious mores, which insisted on their unwavering commitment to Christianity and strict adherence to the Mosaic code of laws, continue to influence American democracy even after their progeny abandoned their strict orthodoxy.<sup>98</sup> These laws were rigidly upheld by their political communities and in that way penetrated into the domain of conscience to produce in

the citizen an internal sense of moral duty. Tocqueville sees this commitment to moral duty as their most valuable legacy to American democracy whose resilience he believes is owed to the fact that their mores over time grew preponderant over those of the South. He credits religion and freedom for giving the inhabitants of New England manly habits defined by a strong individual self-reliance that found its ultimate expression in a general commitment to civic life for the well-being of the community.

Tocqueville contrasts the legacy of the Puritans in the American North to the mores of the South, which were shaped by a tradition of slavery that exerted a debilitating influence on the character and the laws of the Southerner. The chasm that separated the industrious North from the indolent South was already becoming an increasingly controversial issue during Tocqueville's American tour and he discussed this issue at length with Mr. Adams. The stark difference in habits that divided the American North and South reinforced for Tocqueville the value of infusing politics with a moral content to maintain liberty inasmuch as he argues that the preponderance of the religious and political habits of the North<sup>99</sup> offers the only hope for the survival of the union of the states. The political and religious doctrines of the New England founders produced a very distinct national character than that produced by slavery in the South. In Tocqueville's view the culture of the South, which he characterizes as "feverish, disordered, revolutionary and passionate," was vastly inferior in every respect to that of the North whose government appeared "strong, regular, durable, perfectly suited to the physical and moral state of things."<sup>100</sup>

In short, Tocqueville is unequivocal that the “general spirit” of the Puritan settlers of the sixteenth century played a pivotal role in shaping American democracy into a morally ordered society. Religion kept them firmly anchored in a sea of democratic inconstancies and enabled them to perpetuate in democracy the English tradition of freedom because for them freedom and Christianity were one and the same. It is for this reason that Tocqueville maintains that religion is the first among the Anglo-Americans political institutions. Nevertheless, despite his admiration Tocqueville harbored a strong aristocratic distaste for the way in which overtime the Anglo-American religious spirit took on a commercial character. In his travel notebook, Tocqueville marks his preference for the French Canadian parish priest who “is in every deed the shepherd of his flock,” as opposed to the American Protestant minister who behaves like “an entrepreneur of a religious industry.”<sup>101</sup> Yet, even as he rejects this crude approach to the sanctity of religion he admires its result: a stable democracy whose Puritan forefathers’ religious and republican habits pave the way for the healthy separation of the interests of Heaven from those of this world, if not in spirit at least in the laws.

**Would Extending the Connection with England Beyond Puritanism Have Hampered Tocqueville’s Ability to Make a Strong Case for Disestablishment in France?**

Democracy in America assigns the success of American democracy exclusively to Puritanism’s religious and political doctrines. Tocqueville is much more circumspect about overstating England’s other contributions to that success in his book than he is in his travel notes. This omission was noted by a prominent Tocqueville scholar who affirms that Tocqueville said little about the inheritance from England because he never

fully grasped the significance of the English connection.<sup>102</sup> Given, *inter alia*, his application of Mr. Sparks' historical lesson, which is very much in evidence in his commentary, this study takes the position that Tocqueville is too much of an astute observer and excellent pupil of Montesquieu to commit such a gross oversight without a valid reason. In fact, while he pursued his study of American democracy during his 1831 American sojourn Tocqueville heard his hosts, most particularly Messrs. Sparks and Everett, make repeated suggestions that no one could fully understand American institutions without some knowledge of the history of the English Island from which they sprung.

Tocqueville went to England in August 1833 precisely to fulfill that requirement before undertaking to compose the first volume of Democracy in America in the fall of 1833. His notes on his "*Voyage en Angleterre de 1833*" (Journey to England in 1833) show that he discovered in England the same institutional features he found favorable to liberty in America: a reserved but profound religious disposition; decentralization as the cause of material progress; and political harmony derived from a government that appropriates its rules to the needs of each localities.<sup>103</sup> His travel account parallels Montesquieu observations of England,<sup>104</sup> and this chapter makes clear how much Tocqueville cements this connection by insisting he saw in evidence in America the same harmony among religion, commerce and liberty Montesquieu found there. Therefore, Tocqueville had more than enough supporting material to underscore the strong connection between America and England.

There are several considerations, however, that suggest Tocqueville had good rhetorical reasons to circumscribe the English-American connection to the legacy of



Puritanism. First, his primary objective was to paint for the French the tableau of a true democratic society. America was the nineteenth century's democratic country *par excellence* whereas the principle of aristocracy was the vital principle of England's constitution despite a general movement toward democracy insofar as the aristocracy was founded on wealth,<sup>105</sup> which unlike France's caste system was something acquirable. Any significant focus on England therefore would have distracted from his main goal even though England remained throughout his life the "democratic" model he wanted for France. In a letter to his friend, John Stuart Mill, shortly after the publication of Democracy in America he laments the way in which in France democracy remains a velleity that debases it. In contrast he praises England's limited practice of democracy. "All that I see of English democrats leads me on the contrary to think that if their views are often narrow and exclusive, at least theirs is the true goal that friends of democracy must take. Their final object seems to me to be, in reality, to put the majority of citizens in a fit state for governing and to make it capable of governing... I am myself a democrat in this sense."<sup>106</sup> Second, he wanted to demonstrate the mutual dependence among religion, morality and liberty by underscoring how the disestablishment of the Church in America was an important factor contributing in their concurrence.

A greater emphasis on England, especially one that extended to England proper in the nineteenth century would have weakened his advocacy for disestablishment in France because the Established Church of England was at the time of his visit in an analogous position with the Catholic Church of France before the Revolution of 1789, i.e., it was rich, in disarray and held political power. Moreover, it is noteworthy that Tocqueville recognized the troubles of the Anglican Church would have very different consequences

for the religious spirit in England than those that heretofore assailed the Catholic Church in France for reasons related specifically to the English character, which as shown previously he qualified as more serious and less passionate than that of the French. In addition, unlike the French who exchanged Catholicism for irreligion, the English were merely replacing their faithfulness to the Anglican Church with a new allegiance to the Protestant sects that were growing in proportion with the loss of Anglican adherents.<sup>107</sup>

These considerations no doubt reinforced for Tocqueville the inconvenience of dwelling too much on the link between America and England. To do so might not only have harmed his long-term objective to reconcile religion and liberalism in France but also it might help to widen the division between Catholics and liberals in that country. It would at the very least serve to entrench the first in their desire to reinstate the Church to its former political supremacy which it hoped to achieve by gaining absolute control of the French educational system, a politically controversial issue in the 1830's.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, the liberals who did not want to share political power with the Catholic party would have been too happy to find a new reason to discredit religion by drawing an analogy between the Anglican Church and Catholic Church. Lastly, Tocqueville would not have wanted to show any coincidence between England's general movement toward democracy and the growth of Protestantism in that country. Therefore, it was best for him to confine the influence of England to Puritanism in his commentary, which aims primarily at reconciling liberty with the Catholic Church in France. It was more important to his objective to emphasize the primacy of the institutions that allow the Americans to maintain the "general spirit" of liberty, which Montesquieu had found prevalent among the English. His hope for an ordered democracy in France would be

better realized if he focused on the institutional character of American democracy, which promotes a modern version of ancient republican virtue.

Tocqueville's new political science in effect shows that enlightenment is to modern democracy what Montesquieu affirms virtue was to ancient democracy. He succeeds in demonstrating that political virtue in modern democracy is not an end in itself but a means through which private interest is harmonized with the common good. The founding of America on a moral and political principle premised on reason allowed religion and politics each to operate in its own respective sphere to allow the first to serve the interest of freedom. For Tocqueville, the bifurcation of the spiritual and political has unrivaled benefits for the democratic social state, which fosters chaos and disorder. It not only preserves religion from sharing the uncertain fortune of political life but functions also to allow the internalization of an unchanging moral order to guide citizens through its vicissitudes.

America draws its inclination for passive and voluntary obedience in the moral world from the Puritans, whose piety did not preclude them from attending to their well-being and freedom in the political world. The order and harmony of religion, the source of divine goodness and justice, provided them a marvelous counterbalance for coping with the chaos and disharmony Tocqueville asserts reign in the political world, the source of human injustice and evil. He finds in the Anglo-American whose mores were shaped by the Puritans empirical evidence to buttress his conviction that moral order is the most important pillar of political freedom.

The practical religious habits of the Anglo-Americans combined with the enlightenment they obtain from their political institutions make it possible for them to

make universal reason the locus of moral authority insofar as universal reason in this country is guided by religious habits. Thus, in the final analysis Tocqueville's commentary implies that enlightenment as the governing principle of democracy needs religion. He shows determinedly that it is the Americans' religious habits, which they confound with freedom, much less than their convictions that generate the moral order necessary to allow the sovereign to govern itself.

Tocqueville's commentary on American democracy at the end of Volume I is not his final word on the important place he carves for religion in his political philosophy. It is rather an exposition of the way in which enlightened self-interest can become a substitute for virtue in modern democracy. The next chapter outlines how Tocqueville applies the lessons he learns in America to Rousseau's teaching on opinion to show that a complete equality of conditions fosters a simulacrum of virtue founded on enlightened self-interest as well as conformity to common opinion, which in democracy constitutes the most powerful source of moral authority. These lessons reinforce his conviction that the legislator must harness religion to shape common opinion in democracy to lead men to a modified virtue that accommodates democratic inclinations for the sake of freedom.

---

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Approximately a month after his arrival in the United States, Tocqueville writes to Kergolay that “the religious and anti-religious instincts that can exist in man develop themselves here in perfect liberty; I would like to make you see this curious spectacle, you would find in it the two principles that divide the political world elsewhere. Protestants of all faiths, Anglicans, Lutherans, Calvinists, Presbyterians, Anabaptists, Quakers, and a hundred other Christian sects, constitute the background of the population. Practicing and indifferent population, which lives from day to day, accommodating itself to an environment less satisfying than peaceful but in which conformity is satisfied.” Letter to Louis de Kergolay, June 29, 1831, in Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d’Alexis de Tocqueville et de Louis de Kergolay, ed. J. P. Mayer, texte établi par André Jardin, introduction et notes par Jean-Alain Lesourd, (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), tome XIII, 229. (Hereafter references to this work will appear as QC XIII)

Tocqueville maintains this position in his conversation with the distinguished physician, Dr. Richard Spring Stewart, on November 1, 1831 at the time of his visit to the state of Maryland. In response to the doctor’s question regarding his general impression of the state of religion in the United States, Tocqueville states the following. “I admit that I am inclined to see a profound indifference beneath all religious beliefs. I imagine that the greater part of the enlightened classes have many doubts about dogma, but that they are careful not to show them; for they feel that positive religion is a moral and political institution which it is important to preserve.” Alexis de Tocqueville, Journey to America, trans. George Lawrence, ed. J. P. Mayer, (London: Faber & Faber LTD, 1959), 79. See

---

also Alexis de Tocqueville, “*Voyage en Amérique*” in Oeuvres I, Bibliothèque de La Pléiade, édition publiée sous la direction d’André Jardin avec pour ce volume la collaboration de Françoise Mélonio et Lise Quéffelec, (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), 94. (Hereafter references to this work, which contains *inter alia* Tocqueville’s travel notes to America, England, Ireland, Switzerland and Algeria, will be shown as notes for the appropriate country in Oeuvres I. In cases where the reference is shown as an ibidem the English and French page numbers will be separated by a slash respectively, e.g., “*Voyage en Amérique*” in Oeuvres I, 79/94.)

Compare Tocqueville’s perspective with Montesquieu’s description of the effect of liberty on religion in England. “With regard to religion, as in this state each citizen would have his own will and would consequently be led by his own enlightenment or his fantasies, what would happen is either that everyone would be very indifferent to all sorts of religion of whatever kind, in which case everyone would tend to embrace the dominant religion, or that one would be zealous for religion in general, in which case sects would multiply.” The Spirit of the Laws, trans. & ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, Harold Samuel Stone, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pt. 3, bk. 19, chap. 27, 330.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pt. 1, bk. 5, chap. 3, 44.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pt. 1, bk. 3, chap. 3, 22.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pt. 1, bk. 4, chap. 1, 31.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pt. 1, bk. 4, chap. 5, 35.

<sup>6</sup> “*Voyage en Angleterre et en Irlande de 1835*” in Oeuvres I, 514.

---

<sup>7</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, trans. & ed. Harvey C. Mansfield & Delba Winthrop, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 7. Also see Alexis de Tocqueville, De la démocratie en Amérique, Oeuvres II, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, ed. André Jardin with Jean-Claude Lamberti and James T. Schleifer, (Paris: éditions Gallimard, 1992), 8. (Henceforth references to this work will appear as DA, volume, part, chapter for both the English translation and French text with the page of the English translation appearing before that of the French text and the two separated by a slash).

<sup>8</sup> DA, II, 1, 17, 459/584.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., I, 2, 5, 201/239-240.

<sup>10</sup> Letter to Arthur de Gobineau, September 5, 1843, in Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et d'Arthur de Gobineau, texte établi et annoté par M. Degros, intro. par J. J. Chevalier, avertissement de J. P. Mayer, (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), tome IX, 46. (Hereafter references to this work will appear as OC IX).

<sup>11</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Francisque de Corcelle, correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Madame Swetchine, ed. J. P. Mayer, volume établi par Pierre Gibert, soumis pour contrôle et approbation à Claude Bressollette et André Jardin, (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), tome XV, 292-293. (Hereafter reference to this work will be shown as OC XV). See also Selected Letters on Politics and Society, ed. Roger Boesche, trans. James Toupin and Roger Boesche, (Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 338-339.

<sup>12</sup> Even though this chapter focuses on Tocqueville's debt to enlightenment principles, particularly those of Montesquieu, it is important to underscore here that his view of

---

slavery is guided far more by his Christian and liberal principles than the prejudices that characterize Montesquieu's "enlightened" view of the subject. Tocqueville viewed the South's slave culture as the scourge of American democracy. He has been criticized for the lack of importance he seems to have given this subject in his work. He had good reasons for his decision: 1) there was an agreement between Tocqueville and his traveling companion to America and friend Gustave de Beaumont that the latter would take up the task of depicting the effect of slavery on the mores of Americans and Beaumont published in 1835 a work titled "Marie ou l'esclavage aux Etats Unis" to fulfill that objective; and 2) Tocqueville's overall objective in the *Democracy* is to paint a picture of democracy for his French audience. Thus, America's race problem is tangential to his subject inasmuch as it holds no relevance for his primary audience, which is why he relegates it to the last chapter of volume I and confines his discussion of the issue of Negro slavery in America to its toxic effects on the health of the republic. As far as he was concerned Beaumont's "Marie" addresses the issue of slavery by painting its debilitating influence on the character of master and slave.

Nevertheless, Tocqueville is indebted to Montesquieu for his great understanding of the pernicious effect of slavery on morality and the grave danger to which a state exposes itself when it harbors a large slave population, particularly one which is subject to the cruelty of masters without any protection from the laws. ( The Spirit of the Laws, pt. 3, bk. 15, chaps. 1, 13 & 16, 246, 256 & 258-259) His analysis of the consequences of Southern slavery certainly addresses these issues.

However, Tocqueville parts with Montesquieu for whom Christianity's principle of equality, which makes slavery a practice against nature, does not extend to Negroes who



---

Montesquieu maintains are not men. Not only does Montesquieu maintain that slavery in some countries can be founded on natural reason, (The Spirit of the Laws, pt. 3, bk. 15, chap 7, 251-252) but he also cites several economic reasons he deems appropriate to sanction Negro slavery in America. (The Spirit of the Laws, pt. 3, bk. 15, chap. 5, 250) Needless to say that Tocqueville takes a diametrically opposed view from Montesquieu on the moral issue of Negro slavery that is consistent with the Christian and liberal principles he advocates. As has already been shown in this study his correspondence with Gobineau makes clear that he rejects the fatalism inherent in racial theories for its deleterious effect on individuals and nations.

Moreover, Tocqueville devoted considerable energy both in and out of parliament to the emancipation of Negro slaves in France's colonies. In 1843 he wrote a series of essays published in *Le Siècle*, a Paris newspaper, in which he argued for emancipation both from a moral and pragmatic standpoint. He refutes Montesquieu's economic argument to support Negro slavery by adducing the success of English emancipation in nineteen colonies, which contrary to widespread anticipation did not destroy colonial economies, to support his abolition crusade. (See Alexis de Tocqueville, Writings on Empire and Slavery, ed. and trans. Jennifer Pitts, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 199-226 passim.)

<sup>13</sup> OC XV, 296-297

<sup>14</sup> It is important to note here that Tocqueville's new liberalism does not in anyway devalue the individual. In fact, Tocqueville is sincerely attached to individualism in its nobler form and if he denounces democratic individualism he does so in the name of individual dignity and love of liberty. A letter written to Arthur de Gobineau on January

---

24, 1857 attests his unwavering confidence in the individual and his freedom. “To me, human societies, like persons, become something worth while only through their use of liberty. I have always said that it is more difficult to stabilize and to maintain human liberty in our new democratic societies than in certain aristocratic societies of the past. But I shall never dare to think it impossible. And I pray to God lest He inspires me with the idea that one might as well despair of trying. No, I shall not believe that this human race, which is at the head of all visible creation, has become that bastardized flock of sheep which you say it is, and that nothing remains but to deliver it without future and without hope to a small number of shepherds, who after all, are not better animals than are we, the human sheep, and who indeed are often worse. You will forgive me when I have less confidence in you than in the goodness and the justice of God.” Letter to Arthur de Gobineau, January 24, 1857, in OC IX, 280. See also Alexis de Tocqueville, “The European Revolution” & Correspondence with Gobineau, intro., ed., and trans., John Lukacs, (Wesport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1959), 309-310. Lastly see Jean-Claude Lamberti, Tocqueville and the Two Democracies, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1989), 175.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. The Spirit of the Laws, pt. 1, bk. 4, chap. 5, 35-36 & bk. 5, chap. 1, 42.

<sup>16</sup> DA, I, 2, 9, 297-298/361.

<sup>17</sup> DA, II, 2, 15, 519/657.

<sup>18</sup> Journey to America, 210-211. See also “Voyage en Amérique in Oeuvres I, 230-231.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 258/275-276.

<sup>20</sup> The Spirit of the Laws, pt. 1, bk. 5, chap. 2, 42.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pt. 1, bk. 5, chap. 3, 43.

---

<sup>22</sup> DA, I, 2, 6, 226/270.

<sup>23</sup> The Spirit of the Laws, pt. 1, bk. 5, chap. 3, 43.

<sup>24</sup> Tocqueville states that his understanding of the expression *moeurs* is similar to “the sense the ancients attached to the word mores; not only do I apply it to mores properly so-called, which one could call habits of the heart, but to the different notions that men possess, to the various opinions that are current in their midst, and to the sum of ideas of which the habits of the mind are formed. I therefore comprehend under this word the moral and intellectual state of a people.” DA, I, 2, 9, 275/331.

The key here is that mores for Tocqueville encompass the habits of the heart, the domain of religion, as well as those of the mind. The mores and laws of the Americans combine the religious beliefs of the Puritans and love of liberty that prompted them to seek political freedom in exile to practice their religion. The result is that there are two tendencies, “diverse but not contrary, traces of which it is easy to find everywhere in mores as in the laws...Far from harming each other, these two tendencies apparently so opposed, advance in accord and seem to lend each other mutual support.” *Ibid.*, I, 1, 2, 43/47-48.

Tocqueville’s definition of mores coincides with Rousseau’s classification of laws, which include political or fundamental laws, civil and criminal laws and an unspecified fourth. [This fourth law,] the most important of all, which is inscribed neither on marble nor brass, but in the hearts of the citizens, a law which forms the true constitution of the state, a law which gathers new strength every day and which, when other laws age or wither away, reanimates or replaces them; a law which sustains a nation in the spirit of its

---

institution and imperceptibly substitutes the force of habit for the force of authority. I refer to morals, customs and, above all, belief: this feature, unknown to our political theorists, is the one on which the success of all the laws depends; it is the feature on which the great lawgiver bestows his secret care, for though he seems to confine himself to detailed legal enactments, which are really only the arching of the vault, he knows that morals, which develop more slowly, ultimately become its immovable keystone. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract, trans. Maurice Cranston, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968), bk. II, chap. 12, 99-100.

<sup>25</sup> DA, I, 2, 9, 273/329.

<sup>26</sup> The Spirit of the Laws, pt. 4, bk. 20, chaps. 1 & 2, 338-339.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pt. 4, bk. 20, chap. 7, 343.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> “*Voyage en Angleterre et en Irlande de 1835*” in Oeuvres I, 514.

<sup>30</sup> Letter to Eugène Stoffels, June 28, 1831, in Tocqueville, Selected Letters, 40.

<sup>31</sup> Journey to America, 183. See also “*Voyage en Amérique*” in Oeuvres I, 201.

<sup>32</sup> The spirit of commerce is an essential component of the American republican spirit whose interests take precedence over all other considerations. As they migrate from one part of the union to another to pursue their commercial interests the Anglo-Americans take with them the same religious and republican sentiments. Tocqueville asserts that the bond of commerce will keep the union from disintegrating because North, South and West have all a common material interest to preserve. The North carries the wealth of the union to all parts of the world and the wealth of the globe into the heart of the union. The South and West need the commercial resources of the North, which carries their

---

products across the seas and uses their raw materials for its manufactures and freight for its vessels. Thus, Tocqueville argues that commerce is foremost among the republic's interests insofar as it is the bond that unites Americans and contributes immensely to shaping the national character.

Tocqueville demonstrates the importance of the commercial spirit to the long-term prospects of the American republican union in his discussion of Southern slavery, which is the one single element that poses the greatest threat to its preservation. The shadow cast by slavery over American democracy gives Tocqueville the opportunity to demonstrate the strong resilience of republicanism, which he asserts functions as the country's secular religious creed and as such reigns undisputed in public opinion. In fact, he determines that it is the glue that binds Americans into a cohesive whole despite their regional differences. Tocqueville maintains that republicanism's stronghold on the American psyche is the only hope of survival for the fragile union whose fate hangs in the balance over the issue of Southern slavery. As compelling as it is the issue of slavery is not enough to cause the dismemberment of the Union because at its core the commercial interests of the republic constitute the essence of the American social state.

<sup>33</sup> DA, I, 2, 9, 272-273/328-329.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 273/329-330.

<sup>35</sup> Royer-Collard was admired by Tocqueville for leading the Doctrinaires' brilliant role of intellectual critic of the aristocracy. The Doctrinaires were a group of political thinkers belonging mostly to the bourgeoisie. They were prominent during the Restoration but as Tocqueville saw it their role changed once they had beaten the aristocracy by the social cataclysm of the July Revolution of 1830 that ended the

---

hereditary reign of Charles X. Tocqueville, who was an aristocrat for whom democracy is irresistible for its distributive justice, could not endure any government founded on the bourgeoisie's lively egotism. As the Restoration limped to its final days Tocqueville chose to assume the Doctrinaires' old role of intellectual critic.

It is noteworthy that it was Royer-Collard who as a standing member of *l'Académie française* supported and obtained for Tocqueville's first volume of Democracy in America the Monthyon price of 8 thousand francs. Moreover, Tocqueville is indebted to Royer-Collard for the concept of differentiating between the liberal spirit and the revolutionary spirit of democracy. Françoise Mélonio, Tocqueville and the French, trans. Beth G. Raps, (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 12-13 & 57. See also Jean-Claude Lamberti, "Notice" in De la démocratie en Amérique, Oeuvres II, 1053. Lastly see also letter dated June 3, 1836 in Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Pierre-Paul Royer-Collard – correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Jean-Jacques Ampère, ed. J. P. Mayer, texte établi, annoté et prefacé par André Jardin, (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), tome XI, 15. (Hereafter reference to this work will be shown as OC XI).

<sup>36</sup> George Wilson Pierson, Tocqueville in America, abridged by Dudley C. Lunt from Tocqueville and Beaumont in America, (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959), 2.

<sup>37</sup> Montesquieu defines the general spirit as follows. "Many things govern men: climate, religion, laws, the maxims of the government, examples of past things, mores and manners; a general spirit is formed as a result. To the extent that, in each nation, one of

---

these causes acts more forcefully, the others yield to it...” The Spirit of the Laws, pt. 3, bk. 19, chap. 4.

<sup>38</sup> DA, I, 2, 9, 295/358.

<sup>39</sup> Tocqueville, Selected Letters, 113-114.

<sup>40</sup> OC XV, 96.

<sup>41</sup> OC XIII, 326-327.

<sup>42</sup> DA, I, 1, 2, 29/31.

<sup>43</sup> Journey to America, 234. See also “*Voyage en Amérique*” in Oeuvres I, 253-254.

<sup>44</sup> DA, I, 2, 9, 295/358.

<sup>45</sup> For Tocqueville there exists a distinction between administrative centralization and government centralization. The first is harmful because it stifles initiatives that foster habits of liberty and thus makes citizens dependent on government. In contrast, the second is necessary to the vigor and prosperity of the state since it allows uniformity in handling relations with foreigners. DA, I, 1, 5, 82/96.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., I, 2, 9, 272/328.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., I, 2, 5, 216/258.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., I, 2, 9, 293/355.

<sup>49</sup> Journey to America, 235. See also “*Voyage en Amérique*” in Oeuvres I, 254.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 150/167.

<sup>51</sup> The Spirit of the Laws, pt. 5, bk. 24, chap. 5, 463.

<sup>52</sup> DA, I, 2, 9, 280-281/339.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 276/333.

<sup>54</sup> The Spirit of the Laws, pt. 3, bk. 14, chap. 1, 231.

---

<sup>55</sup> Letter to Louis de Kergolay, June 29, 1831, in OC XIII, 230. See also Tocqueville, Selected Letters,

51-52.

<sup>56</sup> Journey to America, 181. See also “*Voyage en Amérique*” in Oeuvres I, 199.

<sup>57</sup> The Spirit of the Laws, pt. 5, bk. 24, chap. 5, 463.

<sup>58</sup> Journey to America, 177. See also “*Voyage en Amérique*” in Oeuvres I, 192.

<sup>59</sup> Letter to Louis de Kergolay, June 29, 1831, in OC XIII, 227-228. See also Tocqueville, Selected Letters, 49.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 227 and Selected Letters, 49.

<sup>61</sup> DA, I, 2, 9, 276/333.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 278/336.

<sup>63</sup> The Spirit of the Laws, pt. 5, bk. 24, chap. 1, 459.

<sup>64</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile or On Education, intro, trans., and notes Allan Bloom, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1979), bk. 4, 308.

<sup>65</sup> Letter to Arthur de Gobineau, January 24, 1857, in OC IX, 277. See also “The European Revolution” & Correspondence with Gobineau, 305 in which the same letter is dated January 14, 1857, apparently the result of a typographical error.

<sup>66</sup> Marvin Zetterbaum, Tocqueville and the Problem of Democracy, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 15-16.

<sup>67</sup> Jean-Claude Lamberti, Tocqueville and the Two Democracies, 38.

<sup>68</sup> The Spirit of the Laws, pt. 3, bk. 14, chap. 1, 231.



---

<sup>69</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Gustave de Beaumont, ed., J. P. Mayer, texte établi, annoté et prefacé par André Jardin, (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), tome VIII, 164. (Hereafter all references will be noted as OC VIII).

<sup>70</sup> DA, I, 1, 1, 22/23.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., I, 2, 10, 338/408.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., II, 4, 8, 676/853.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., I, 2, 9, 289/350.

<sup>74</sup> George Wilson Pierson, Tocqueville in America, 248-293 *passim*.

<sup>75</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes, correspondance étrangère d'Alexis de Tocqueville: Amérique, Europe continentale, ed. J. P. Mayer, volume établi par Françoise Mélonio, Lise Quéffelec et Anthony Pleasance, soumis pour contrôle et approbation à Jean-Claude Lamberti et à David Lee, (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), tome VII.

<sup>76</sup> DA, I, 1, 2, 32/35.

<sup>77</sup> “Hence by the nature of the compact, every act of sovereignty, that is, every authentic act of the general will, binds or favors all the citizens equally... So long as the subjects submit to such covenants alone, they obey nobody but their own will...” bk. II, chap. 4, 77.

“Inasmuch as the individuals have subjected themselves only to the sovereign, and the sovereign authority is nothing other than the general will, we shall see how each man who obeys the sovereign obeys only himself, and how one is more free under the social pact than in the state of nature.” Emile or On Education, bk. 5, 461.

<sup>78</sup> George Wilson Pierson, Tocqueville in America, 265.

---

<sup>79</sup> DA, I, 1, 5, 57-58/65.

<sup>80</sup> Journey to America, 179 and “*Voyage en Amérique*” in Oeuvres I, 195.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 51/65.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 149/166.

<sup>83</sup> DA, I, 1, 5, 65/75.

<sup>84</sup> DA, I, 2, 6, 228/274.

<sup>85</sup> Tocqueville viewed the socialists’ attempt to abolish this right during the February and June 1848 revolutions as a means to restore under a new banner the despotism of the Old Regime by making government the guardian of society and the master of every man.

Ecrits politiques, “Discours prononcé le 12 Septembre 1848” in Oeuvres I, 1142 & 1144.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 1144.

<sup>87</sup> Letter to Louis de Kergolay, June 29, 1831, in Tocqueville, Selected Letters, 56.

<sup>88</sup> In his famous speech to the Chamber of Deputies on January 27, 1848 he presciently warned his colleagues that the moral depravity of the bourgeois governing class was about to bring upon France a new revolution and urged them as a means to avoid the imminent danger not only to change the spirit of the government but also to consider the utility of reforming the electoral laws. Ecrits politiques in Oeuvres I, 1137-1138.

<sup>89</sup> André Jardin, Tocqueville, A Biography, (New York: Farrar, Straus & Girous, 1988 ), 299-300.

Tocqueville aimed with his domestic political agenda to implement the principles of 1789. He advocated a sequence of progressively larger extensions of the suffrage, free education for the poor, free medical and legal advice for the poor, workers’ banks and

mutual aid societies, the encouragement of independently owned small farms to prevent the misery of rapid urbanization, a moderate welfare program (even though he feared this would encourage the idleness of the poor), rapid democratization of local government and the abolition of slavery in French colonies. Tocqueville, Selected Letters, 136

<sup>90</sup> Letter, March 7, 1848, in Selected Letters, 203.

<sup>91</sup> The Social Contract, bk. I, chaps. 8 & 9, 64-68.

<sup>92</sup> The Spirit of the Laws, pt. 5, bk. 26, chap. 15, 510.

<sup>93</sup> DA, I, 2, 9, 280/338.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 281/339.

<sup>95</sup> DA, I, 1, 2, 43/47.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 43/47.

<sup>97</sup> The Spirit of the Laws, pt. 5, bk. 26, chap. 2, 495.

<sup>98</sup> Although Tocqueville acknowledges a visible sectarianism existed side-by-side with the Puritan pilgrims' religious fervor, he underlines a significant difference between their approach to religion and that of nineteenth century Americans. It is somewhat puzzling that he chooses to show a definitive spiritual chasm separating later generations of Americans from their Puritan forebears although such a gap appears to have occurred already in the seventeenth century, albeit on a much smaller scale. As we know from his stated admiration for Winthrop's definition of liberty, he was familiar with Cotton Mather's Magnalia Christi Americana from which he, no doubt, obtained useful information about the religious influence of the pilgrims on American colonial life. In the Magnalia Christi Americana, Mather shows evidence of a spiritual gap of the kind reported by Tocqueville in the nineteenth century occurring as early as the first half of the

---

1670's. In the biographical section on Cotton Mather in the Magnalia Christi Americana, it is noted that his father observed signs of spiritual decay in the New England state of Massachussetts, the cradle of Puritan piety, shortly after his ordination as minister of the Second Church. "The population of Boston had increased, and many children of the first Congregational settlers of the town lacked the religious fervor which had brought their parents to New England. Some of them, although professing piety, were less concerned with salvation in the next world than with material prosperity in this. In the next two decades the situation became worse." Increase Mather (Cotton's father) in 1674, the year in which Cotton entered Harvard, preached a sermon bewailing the decline of the "power of godliness" in New England. He reminded his listeners that "the interest of New England was Religion, which did distinguish us from the English Plantations; they were built upon a worldly design, but we upon a Religious design...

...Early in 1698, John Leverett, William and Thomas Brattle, and a group of merchants and other prosperous and influential men in Boston, decided to establish a new Church." The Mathers waged a fierce but losing campaign against "these dangerous innovators within the Congregational fold" who sought to subvert the Congregational churches. It appears that their "subversion" amounted to some changes in ritual and innovations in the way in which ministers were authorized to admit to communion and full membership anyone of "visible sanctity without a relation of a religious experience proving 'conversion' or 'regeneration.'" It is important to note that the innovators prevailed over the Mathers. Thus, it would appear that the break with orthodoxy began much earlier and gradually expanded. The innovators of the seventeenth century, like their nineteenth century descendants, were more interested in observing the symbolic rituals of religion

than they were in subjecting themselves to the strictures of Puritan Orthodoxy. Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, Books I & II, ed. Kenneth B. Murdock with the assistance of Elizabeth W. Miller, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), 4-5 and 15-16.

<sup>99</sup> Tocqueville was made acutely aware during his sojourn in America that the Puritans' laws were modified over the course of time until they almost lost their origin in the wave of emigrations that took place originally from the New England states to populate in successive progression the ever expanding Western frontier. This progressive migration westward was largely motivated by economic interests. Among its innumerable benefits for the country, it prevented the division of small estates by opening economic opportunities for younger sons to seek their fortune in the wilderness. Tocqueville finds that by the third emigration, the influence of the New England founders was barely perceptible in the laws. Yet, even if these emigrants modified the laws to adapt them to their new social conditions they nonetheless kept a superstitious respect for the principle of customary laws and the habits of township government with its emphasis on the sovereignty of the people Americans inherited from the English while priests and missionaries kept religion alive to prevent them from falling into anarchy.

<sup>100</sup> Journey to America, 160 and "*Voyage en Amérique*" in Oeuvres I, 177.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 185/203.

<sup>102</sup> George Wilson Pierson, Tocqueville in America, 459.

<sup>103</sup> "*Voyage en Angleterre de 1833*" in Oeuvres I, 435-448 *passim*.

<sup>104</sup> The Spirit of the Laws, pt. 4, bk. 20, chap. 7, 342-343.

<sup>105</sup> "*Voyage en Angleterre de 1833*" in Oeuvres I, 449.

---

<sup>106</sup> Letter, Saturday evening [June 1835], in Tocqueville, Selected Letters, 101. This letter is in response to one from Mill, June 11, 1835, in which he compliments Tocqueville's book and asks him to write an article for his journal. Mill also praises Democracy in America in a review printed in the London and Westminster Review.

<sup>107</sup> "*Voyage en Angleterre de 1833*" in Oeuvres I, 446-447.

<sup>108</sup> France's Chamber of Deputies enacted an educational reform bill in 1833 sponsored by François Guizot. The Guizot Education Law of 1833 expanded the primary school system but did not eliminate the influence of the Catholic Church, which continued to have under its control some primary schools. By the 1840's the Catholic party led by Charles de Montalembert sought to end the state monopoly on secondary education as well. As indicated in Appendix C the debate over this issue in the newspapers strained temporarily Tocqueville's relations with his friend Beaumont. The education issue was not resolved until the Falloux Law of 1850 gave the Church the right to open secondary schools (colleges) in competition with state schools. Tocqueville, Selected Letters, 168-169.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **HOW TOCQUEVILLE ADAPTS ROUSSEAU'S TEACHING ON OPINION TO PROMOTE RELIGION AS THE APPROPRIATE SOURCE OF AUTHORITY IN DEMOCRACIES FOR UNIFYING MEN AND LEADING THEM TO MORAL VIRTUE**

This chapter examines how Rousseau reinforces for Tocqueville the single power of common opinion in shaping the moral fiber of society, especially in democratic republics. Rousseau believes that opinions corrupt man.<sup>1</sup> They are not only the nefarious product of pride, vanity, and ambition but also instruments of deception. He proposes two solutions to this invariable social problem: 1) a pedagogical method to counter passions excited by conventionalities; and 2) a civil religion to strengthen the power of law. In the first case, a proper education meticulously tailored to nurture man's natural development guides him to cultivate his reason and sentiments enabling him to reject the false opinions that harden and spoil the innocent heart with which nature has endowed him.<sup>2</sup> At the same time and with the same care Rousseau outlines a different system of education for woman, one that subjects her to opinions. In the second instance, a universal principle whose object is to enlighten and guide the public serves as the foundation for law since "a blind multitude... seldom knows what is good for it.. [and] must be shown the good path it is seeking."<sup>3</sup> This chapter will focus on the first approach while the second will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, which examines specifically Tocqueville's democratic religious doctrine.

Tocqueville's description of the American founding, which the preceding chapter shows was influenced by Jared Sparks' portrait of the establishment of the New England colony, brings to mind the contour of the theoretical republic Rousseau creates in the Social Contract, a treatise on the intimate connection between liberty and law, both moral

and political. As shown in the previous chapter, Tocqueville attributes the strength of American democracy to the common interests and beliefs that unite its people in their love of freedom. He credits Christianity and republicanism for the moral order that regulates American life in the federal republic despite strong regional differences.

Moreover, in the first volume of Democracy in America he demonstrates that America owes its democratic success to other equally important causes unique to the country such as, *inter alia*, a pervasive equality and institutions that foster morality and republican virtue.

Nevertheless, Rousseau's influence is most apparent in the second volume in which Tocqueville shows the intimate connection between political regimes and moral freedom. He formulates a religious pedagogy to foster democratic liberty in this work by comparing the limits of intellectual freedom in democratic society-- exemplified by America and revolutionary France-- with the reflective taste for it that was the distinctive mark of aristocratic society. This comparison allows him to demonstrate that in democracy man is bereft of the ready source of beliefs that served under the pyramid of status of aristocratic society to regulate social relations: aristocratic power issued from divine right and class opinion directed by the powerful intellect of a few well-born individuals served as the principal arbiter of beliefs. In contrast, democratic equality throws man back on his own resources, which are restricted by the limits of his mind and his short span of life, to formulate his beliefs.

Tocqueville, following Rousseau, maintains that man's condition as well as the necessities of social life compels him to draw his beliefs from a moral and intellectual authority. However, it is noteworthy that Tocqueville, unlike Rousseau, believes that the



place of this authority may be variable and depends on the nature of political regimes.

Having located the center of beliefs in democracy in the opinion of the crowd

Tocqueville aims to imbue common opinion with a moral standard. His work relies heavily on Rousseau's political philosophy insofar as it makes reason an important foundation of belief. Rousseau's assertion that "[t]he greatest ideas of the divinity come to us from reason alone,"<sup>4</sup> provides Tocqueville a powerful premise on which to found democratic morality since Tocqueville's own analysis of democracy leads him to conclude that the most compelling effect of equality on man's intellect is to lead him back toward his "own reason as the most visible and closest source of truth."<sup>5</sup>

For Rousseau social life is impossible unless the goal of the social enterprise, i.e., for men to live equally free under a system of law, is to transform human nature from solitary being into a part of a much greater whole from which the "individual will then receive, in a sense, his life and his being."<sup>6</sup> Tocqueville recognizes Rousseau's solitary being in the atomistic individual democracy creates and like Rousseau he maintains that if [democratic] man is to remain free he will have to replace his independence with a moral and communal existence. Rousseau's political teaching allows Tocqueville to move from the particular practical experience of the Americans, which demonstrates that common actions in an egalitarian society sustain democratic freedom, to the universal. Thus, it enables him to carve a path through which France can hope to lift herself out of the cycle of revolutions in which she is engulfed.

I, too, believe that our contemporaries have been badly brought up  
and that this is a prime cause of their miseries and of their weakness, but I  
believe that a better upbringing could repair the wrongs done by their

miseducation; I believe that it is not permissible to renounce such an effort. I believe that one could still achieve something with our contemporaries, as with all men, through an appeal to their natural decency and common sense.<sup>7</sup>

This perspective allows Tocqueville to nurture amid consistent political upheavals his lifelong hope that France's democratic malaise could be cured in the long-term by reforming opinions. Tocqueville adopts Rousseau's viewpoint that it is opinion that governs man in society to such an extent that he admits in the last years of his life "I attach a secondary influence to institutions on man's destiny."<sup>8</sup> He states elsewhere: "Not mechanical legal structures but the ideas and passions of men are the motive forces of human affairs."<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth century French society displayed the worst propensities of the human heart awakened by democratic equality. The Revolution, which catapulted France from an aristocratic to a democratic society, disrupted ancient beliefs, weakened authority and obscured the common ideas that serve as moral anchors in society.

If equality of conditions is favorable to good morals, the social travail that renders conditions equal is quite fatal to them... In the fifty years that France has been transforming itself, we have rarely had freedom, but always disorder. In the midst of the universal confusion of ideas and general shaking of opinions, amid this incoherent mixture of just and unjust, of true and false, of right and fact, public virtue has become uncertain and private morality unsteady.<sup>10</sup>

Tocqueville is convinced that the French nation can eventually give itself an ordered democratic state like that of the Americans only if the all-absorbing preoccupation with private interests that divide the country can be neutralized by shared beliefs to bind men into a community. But, he faces insurmountable barriers to accomplish this objective in France, a country which he believes is slipping relentlessly toward the materialism equality engenders. "Materialism is a dangerous malady of the human mind in all nations; but one must dread it particularly in a democratic people because it combines marvelously with the most familiar vice [the taste for material enjoyments that disposes men to believe that all is nothing but matter] of the heart in these peoples."<sup>11</sup> He expresses this concern to his friend Arthur de Gobineau whose materialist racial theories he opposed.

I never concealed from you that I am greatly prejudiced against what seems to be your principal idea, which, I must confess, to me seems to belong to the group of materialistic theories... I am also concerned whether the present state of public opinion is at all propitious for the success of a book such as yours. For, even though people are becoming every day more subservient to materialism through their tastes and habits, and through the increasing mediocrity of political and moral doctrines, they become at the same time extreme spiritualists in their philosophy.<sup>12</sup>

In the tradition of Rousseau, Tocqueville proceeds to show that since equality brings man to rely solely on his reason only a rational principle that transcends the material world can combat democracy's worst inclinations and foster in the democratic regime a spirit of liberty. For him a religion that teaches man about the immortality of

the soul helps to guard democratic peoples from descending into the fatal circle of materialism into which they are propelled because it forces them to think about the future, a powerful incentive for abiding by a strict code of moral conduct in this life.

**Why Tocqueville Expands his Theoretical Framework beyond Montesquieu to Rousseau in the Second Volume of Democracy in America**

As the enlightenment's foremost advocate of equality in the name of freedom, Rousseau provides Tocqueville a more comprehensive framework than Montesquieu to analyze democracy in all its facets in the second volume. In this work Tocqueville turns his focus from analyzing the effects of the democratic social state of the Americans on their political laws and mores to uncover the defects of equality and prevent them from destroying all bases of freedom in the old aristocratic societies of Europe, especially revolutionary France. This expansion is consistent with and provides continuity to the premise upon which democratic morality is founded in the first volume insofar as Rousseau agrees with Montesquieu that "virtue [is] the cardinal principle of a republic."<sup>13</sup>

However, Rousseau argues that Montesquieu errs in attributing this principle solely to a republic since it ought to be the foundation of any well-constituted state, albeit with a greater or lesser degree according to the form of government. For example, he argues that an elective aristocracy needs fewer virtues than a democracy because in an ideal world "it is the best and most natural arrangement for the wisest to govern the multitude, [provided] they will govern for its advantage and not their own."<sup>14</sup> But, Rousseau who like Tocqueville recognizes that democracy is more just than other forms of government is also cognizant that the age of aristocracy has passed and that with the dawning of egalitarianism a new type of man has emerged who is the personification of

mediocrity.<sup>15</sup> His pedagogical project, which is directed at illuminating a path to virtue and liberty for this new human specimen, offers Tocqueville greater possibilities than Montesquieu for discovering the means to make equality compatible with freedom.

Montesquieu's political philosophy leads Tocqueville to identify the combination of happy circumstances that produced American democratic virtue and which, by the way, distinguish America from any other democratic republics, ancient and modern. France and the fledgling democracies of the Old World, which are founded on the debris of feudal aristocracy, possess none of the conditions that have contributed to the compatibility of equality and freedom in the New World. Moreover, Montesquieu's democratic theory is limited to the ancient political world and therefore its scope does not embrace the most important condition of modern democracies: equality of conditions. If Montesquieu's perspective helps Tocqueville to distinguish the particular attributes of American virtue, which is a mixture of the patriotic spirit found in the democracies of the ancient world, aristocratic courage and England's commercial spirit, it does not however lend itself to identifying a generic standard for virtue in modern democracies.

Tocqueville finds Rousseau's teaching on virtue, which proceeds from his insightful understanding of human nature, particularly helpful when he turns his focus from America to analyze democracy in France where it oscillates between despotism and anarchy. Rousseau not only takes equality of conditions into account but he also studies the human passions awakened by the advent of egalitarianism and their detrimental effect on the body politic. His teaching aims to combat these passions, which lead to the single-minded pursuit of private interest thereby causing the moral foundation of society to erode. Tocqueville's empirical study of democratic society in France leads him to

conclude with Rousseau that a counterpoise must be found to stem the egoistic preoccupation with one's well-being egalitarianism promotes. While Tocqueville proclaims democratic equality as a "providential fact,"<sup>16</sup> he nonetheless recognizes like Rousseau that it "demands much vigilance and courage to maintain it unchanged."<sup>17</sup> Rousseau's teaching highlights for Tocqueville the endemic problem of democracy allowing him to identify its cure by comparing the democracies of America and France.

Rousseau's teaching is based not only on the fundamental premise that the primary objective of education is to make man strong but also on the principle that man is sociable as a result of his weakness.<sup>18</sup> Noting that equality causes man to feel reduced to a weak and isolated being, Tocqueville finds in Rousseau's teaching a way in which to exhort democratic man to transform his weakness into strength. Tocqueville observes that the feeling of weakness and isolation equality engenders is capable of producing two distinct tendencies. On the one hand, it can change the aspect of civil society by suggesting new sentiments and ideas to man that turn his heart to humanity while on the other it can bring out the worst in human nature by promoting a fierce competitiveness, which left undirected extinguishes the bonds of affection that make communal life possible.

Rousseau is the first modern philosopher to recognize that there is a conflict between social equality and freedom for the following reasons. The democratic state is characterized by instability because theoretically those who make the law also execute the law. This structural defect makes it liable to internecine strife because inevitably a multitude of particular interests insinuates themselves in public affairs to blur the attention that ought to be given to general perspectives. Once the power of government is

misused, it follows inevitably that liberty will be misused. Consequently, he maintains that the constancy of democracies depends on a citizenry that possesses moral strength to subordinate its private interests to the common good. However, it is painfully evident to Rousseau that the egalitarian principles of the enlightenment produced a weak man whose ascendance makes it extremely difficult to achieve in modern society the same dedication to the community that was seen in the democracies of the ancient world Montesquieu studied.

This “new” man is the antithesis of Rousseau’s view of the ideal citizen inasmuch as he places his good above the common good. Rousseau contrasts him to savage man who he partially resembles insofar as he shares the savage’s inclination to be concerned only with himself but lacks his wholesome goodness. Savage man is innately good because his relations are confined to the things that ensure his preservation. In contrast, Rousseau’s “new” man has desires that exceed his needs and thus is dependent on other men to satisfy a host of imaginary wants, not least of all his understanding of himself. “Dependence on things, since it has no morality, is in no way detrimental to freedom and engenders no vices. Dependence on men, since it is without order, engenders all the vices, and by it, master and slave are mutually corrupted. If there is any means of remedying this ill in society, it is to substitute law for man and to arm the general will with a real strength superior to the action of every particular will.”<sup>19</sup>

One of the fundamental principles of Rousseau’s teaching is that in becoming a citizen man agrees to make his interest identical with that of the common good. Social life irrevocably divests him of the freedom the savage enjoyed to be concerned only with himself. It makes the essential demand that he harmonizes his concerns with those of his

community. Thus, for Rousseau to disregard the good of one's community and one's fellows for the sake of one's own is to be in effect immoral. A man who has not learned to sacrifice his interest for the common interest has not learned to struggle with himself and conquer himself. He possesses neither the wholesome goodness of the savage nor the uprightness of the citizen. He is unjust because inevitably he causes hurt to another when he pursues exclusively his own good.

He who in the civil order wants to preserve the primacy of the sentiments of nature does not know what he wants. Always in contradiction with himself, always floating between his inclinations and his duties, he will never be either man or citizen. He will be good neither for himself nor for others. He will be one of these men of our days: a Frenchman, an Englishman, a bourgeois. He will be nothing.<sup>20</sup>

Rousseau indicts the bourgeois because he is not a citizen and therefore he is immoral since for him it is inexorably citizenship and the obligations it entails that allows man to realize his own nature as man. The bourgeois is not a man because he does not rule himself for it is only by taking an interest in the common good that man as citizen secures the liberty that allows him to rule himself. He is a pathetic egoist who in thinking only of himself is not only ruled by his passions but is also totally dependent on the opinion of his peers for his sense of worth. Rousseau views the ascendance of bourgeois values as a great threat to liberty because this man's internalized contradictions and insatiable hunger for material comfort drives him to sacrifice all the things that are conducive to it, including, *inter alia*, country, friendship and family. Thus, social equality gives rise to an immoral consequence insofar as it tends to destroy the



fundamental bonds of social life. Rousseau shows that the moral corruption unleashed by bourgeois society is reversible only if the people as sovereign exercises its right to compel the sociability indispensable to freedom, i.e., “the love of law and justice or willingness [of the individual] to sacrifice, if need be, his life to his duty.”<sup>21</sup>

Rousseau makes an intimate connection between law and freedom in his description of the change produced in man by the contractual agreement that converts his natural freedom into civil freedom. If man gains by the social contract civil liberty and the legal right of property in his possessions, he is also constrained by it to subordinate his particular interest to that of the common good. Yet, he is free because he is both sovereign and subject. As a member of the sovereign body he enacts the rules and laws he is obliged to obey as subject and thus in effect he rules himself. His obedience is a moral duty that draws its impulse from his will to rule himself. The social pact thus changes the rule of conduct that guided man’s actions in his original state by replacing instinct with justice giving his actions the moral quality they previously lacked.

It is only then, when the voice of duty has taken the place of physical impulse, and right that of desire, that man, who has hitherto thought only of himself, finds himself compelled to act on other principles, and to consult his reason rather than study his inclinations... We might also add that man acquires with civil society, civil freedom, which alone makes man the master of himself; for to be governed by appetite alone is slavery, while obedience to a law one prescribes to oneself is freedom.<sup>22</sup>

As shown previously in this study Tocqueville's own notion of freedom like that of Rousseau incorporates two essential elements: a moral standard and a political one, but it proceeds from a different intellectual orientation. Tocqueville owes his moral view of liberty to his Catholic upbringing and his political view of it to his aristocratic lineage insofar as it exalts the courage that produces human greatness. In contrast, Rousseau's concept of liberty issues from a visceral reaction against the skepticism of the eighteenth century *philosophes* who in the name of human progress and science wanted to deprive man of the freedom of will that gives moral significance to his actions. He rejects the *philosophes'* call for an "enlightened despotism"<sup>23</sup> to stimulate progress by insisting that social life is based on mutual obligations and reciprocity between the individual and his community. This voluntary exchange is the sole legitimate basis for social life and the only one that makes moral freedom possible.

Nevertheless, the passion for liberty Tocqueville shares with Rousseau leads him to seek along the same path as his predecessor a means to safeguard it in an "enlightened" new world where bourgeois values-- having supplanted the aristocratic virtue he so loves -- pose a colossal impediment to freedom. Yet, because their views are informed by different perspectives they follow the same tract up to a point. Tocqueville's Catholic upbringing as will be shown in the next chapter restrains him from accepting *de facto* Rousseau's rejection of Christian principles as a guide for reason even though he shares some of his disillusionments with the Catholic Church and his distaste for unreasonable dogmas.<sup>24</sup> Or put another way, Tocqueville follows Rousseau insofar as he wants to make reason the center of moral authority but he departs from him inasmuch as he believes Christian mores are needed in democracies to guide man's reason.

Tocqueville like Rousseau harbors a strong distaste for the bourgeois. He provides a scathing portrait of this man in his Recollections, which it is worthwhile to reproduce here since he did not intend this work for publication and thus it offers a most sincere expression of his thought.

Our history from 1789 to 1830, viewed from a distance and as a whole, affords as it were the picture of a struggle to the death between the *Ancien Régime*, its traditions, memories, hopes and men, as represented by the aristocracy, and the New France led by the Middle Class... In 1830 the triumph of the middle class had been definite and so thorough that all political power, every franchise, every prerogative, and the whole government was confined and, as it were, heaped up within the narrow limits of this one class, to the statutory exclusion of all beneath them and the actual exclusion of all above. Not only did it thus rule society, but it may be said to have formed it. It entrenched itself in every vacant place, prodigiously augmented the number of places and accustomed itself to live almost as much upon the Treasury as upon its own industry.

No sooner had the Revolution of 1830 become an accomplished fact, than there ensued a great lull in political passion, a sort of general subsidence, accompanied by a rapid increase in public wealth. The particular spirit of the middle class became the general spirit of the government; it ruled the latter's foreign policy as well as affairs at home: an active, industrious spirit, often dishonourable, generally orderly, occasionally reckless through vanity or egoism, but timid by temperament,

moderate in all things except in its love of ease and comfort, and last but not least mediocre. It was a spirit which, mingled with that of the people or of the aristocracy, can do wonders; but which by itself will never produce more than a government shorn of both virtue and greatness.

Master of everything in a manner that no aristocracy has ever been or may ever hope to be, the middle class, when called upon to assume the government, took it up as an industrial enterprise; it entrenched itself behind its power, and before long, in their egoism, each of its members thought much more of his private business than of public affairs; of his personal enjoyment than of the greatness of the nation.<sup>25</sup>

The author of Democracy in America's depiction of the French middle class recalls Rousseau's portrait of the bourgeois. Nevertheless, it is important to note that he locates the vile inclinations of the French middle class less in equality than in a particular political circumstance. As will be shown below Tocqueville's study of American democracy allows him to modify Rousseau's teaching to show that equality, despite its deficiencies, produces *ipso facto* a salutary effect on the ideas and sentiments of men, which when properly directed can lead them to moral virtue. In sum, a close look at Tocqueville's treatise reveals that he identifies two distinct democratic men: his American is the prototype of Rousseau's citizen whereas his French or revolutionary democrat is the archetype of Rousseau's bourgeois.

Tocqueville's commentary on democracy juxtaposes the American democrat to his French counterpart and compares them to the aristocrat to show that structurally democracy indeed has a proclivity to debilitate public virtue. These comparisons allow

him to show that: 1) the Old World democrat distinguishes himself from the American by prizing equality above liberty primarily because his encounter with democracy issued from a protracted class struggle and thus he is ready to sacrifice everything like Rousseau's bourgeois to satisfy his singular passion for a good that so long eluded him; and 2) equality intrinsically inclines men to selfishness making this age old vice more pernicious to democratic society because it has acquired in it a political dimension but this tendency is not without remedy as the American example demonstrates.

In the first place he shows how a long history of social inequality prevents the European democrat from discerning what is obvious to the American: "freedom [is] the best instrument and greatest guarantee of [his] well-being. Americans love these two things for each other." In this sense the American is indistinguishable from the aristocrat. Thus, Tocqueville maintains that unlike the French the American has an enlightened view of equality that enables him to see participation in public affairs as his principal affair because it secures for him a government that allows him to acquire the goods he desires and enjoy in peace those he has acquired.<sup>26</sup> Secondly, Tocqueville shows how democratic selfishness, which he redefines as individualism, is more pernicious than its aristocratic incarnation because it erodes the foundation of liberty leaving man prey to despotism.

Individualism leads man to turn all his sentiments toward the self abandoning society at large to itself. Tocqueville differentiates this tendency to withdraw from the mass and create one's own little society with one's family and friends from the depraved instinct that gives rise to selfishness. Individualism, unlike selfishness which extinguishes all virtues, begins only by withering the source of public virtue but

Tocqueville affirms that in the long term it annihilates all the others and degenerates into selfishness. Individualism is more intractable than selfishness because it is undeniably produced by equality and as a result it permeates the entire social fabric and undermines it. In contrast selfishness is a vice as old as the world and thus is a trait found randomly in every society and not the defining mark of any.

Tocqueville differentiates individualism from selfishness by demonstrating that the latter's existence in aristocratic society did not prevent men from being bound to each other by the reciprocal exchange of protection and cooperation the hierarchic social state imposed upon superiors and inferiors respectively. Moreover, men were attached to one another by ties of caste, class, guild or family. Thus, the structure of aristocracy ensured sociability inasmuch as it made it practically impossible for the individual to withdraw completely from involvement in his community, which as previously shown constitutes for both Rousseau and Tocqueville the basis of moral virtue.

Democratic individualism, Tocqueville argues, poses an unprecedented threat to freedom because the constant movement that characterizes the democratic social state destroys the bonds of affection and corporate attachments that maintained order in the aristocratic community. Tocqueville's democrat is tormented incessantly by the fear of falling and the ambition to rise on the ever-rotating social ladder. Money is his only means for transforming his social status and distinguishing himself from his neighbors. Thus, the desire to enrich himself takes precedence over all else leaving him vulnerable to succumb to all the passions capable of satisfying his desire. The passion for wealth is particularly harmful to democratic freedom because the egalitarian social state is devoid of the structural mechanisms that exerted moral pressure on the members of aristocratic

society to participate in community affairs. Absorbed by the passion for wealth democratic men are therefore willing to abandon their principal affair, which is to guard their freedom, to the care of anyone, including a despot as long as he is able to secure for them the order they need to conduct business affairs. Tocqueville is painfully aware that nineteenth century French society is constantly teetering on the brink of a vile servitude due to this pervasive problem. “Despotism alone can furnish these passions [preference for business, love of profit, the search for material pleasure and comfort] with the secrecy and shadow which make greed feel at home, and let it reap its dishonest profits despite dishonor. Without despotism these passions would have been strong, with it they are all-powerful.”<sup>27</sup>

Characteristically Tocqueville insists that if the passion for wealth is a product of equality it, nonetheless, has different ramifications for democratic people depending upon whether the equality of conditions they enjoy is complete or tenuous. His teaching relies on this important distinction to suggest the way in which to reconcile the passions equality fosters with a love of freedom.

When the taste for material enjoyments develops in one of these peoples [those transitioning from inequality to equality of conditions] more rapidly than enlightenment and the habits of freedom, there comes a moment when men are swept away and almost beside themselves at the sight of the new goods that they are ready to grasp. Preoccupied with the sole care of making a fortune, they no longer perceive the tight bond that unites the particular fortune of each of them to the prosperity of all. There is no need to tear from such citizens the rights they possess; they

themselves willingly allow them to escape. The exercise of their political duties appears to them a distressing contretemps that distracts them from their industry. If it is a question of choosing their representatives, of giving assistance to authority, of treating the common thing in common, they lack the time; they cannot waste their precious time in useless work. These are games of the idle that do not suit grave men occupied with the serious interests of life. These people believe they are following the doctrine of interest, but they have only a coarse idea of it, and to watch better over what they call their affairs, they neglect the principal one, which is to remain masters of themselves.<sup>28</sup>

The dread of the bourgeois Tocqueville shares with Rousseau leads him to examine closely Rousseau's insightful understanding of the bourgeois and the principal passions that motivate him. Armed with this new perspective he is able to formulate a moral teaching that combine Rousseau's rational moral perspective with the fundamental precepts of Christianity. Therefore, the next section will examine Rousseau's guideline for redirecting the passions to attain virtue in society inasmuch as it provides an essential backdrop against which to view Tocqueville's teaching on religion.

### **How for Rousseau Reason Must Supplant Opinion if Man is to Achieve Moral Virtue in Society**

Rousseau's comprehensive study of human nature leads him to the conclusion that man confounds virtue with the vulgar opinions and prejudices that on the contrary incite the passions and make him weak.<sup>29</sup> According to him nature and a wise providence inscribed in the heart of man two passions: they are self-love and the fear of death. These



two innate passions, which tend to our preservation, awaken the sentiments of our connections with others. But, because opinions distort man's imagination before he is able to sense his relations the passions are modified in social life and Rousseau wants to re-direct them toward their primal inclination. He maintains that as our relations increase we acquire false ideas from which flow new needs that deprave the human heart and extinguish in it the bonds of human affections and reciprocal obligations, which for him constitute the basis of morality insofar as they tend to the common good.

Human virtue for Rousseau consists in the love of order that belongs to a being with the strength of will to overcome the passions<sup>30</sup> or more specifically, one who has the ability to order self-love judiciously in his relations with other men. It is directed by reason and actualized only by a being that knows himself, knows how to live-- which entails his resignation to dying and all the miseries man is heir to-- and makes himself happy by drawing his contentment from within a heart that is robust and humane. In sum, only a man who knows how to order himself by keeping a proportionate balance between his desires and his faculties so that his "power [i.e., reason as governing authority] and will [are put] in perfect equality"<sup>31</sup> is esteemed by Rousseau to be happy and therefore to possess virtue.

At the heart of Rousseau's teaching is the incontestable principle that the first movements of nature are always right and that there is no original perversity to be found in the human heart. Self-love in itself and relative to the individual is good and useful and naturally neutral. It directs us to love what preserves us and to repel what harms us. Its adulteration is a consequence of socialization, which sets men at odds with each other. The inevitable comparisons socialization engenders among human beings produce a

value system that makes them dependent on the judgment and opinion of other men rather than on their natural inclinations for a moral sense of self. Thus, in society self-love is transformed from an instrument of necessity to one of insatiable desires whose fulfillment completely absorbs men and makes them forget their natural goodness. Then, men are driven not by a sense of mutual affection for and obligation to each other but by the expediency of particular interest harmful to their wholesomeness. “Private interest, which in case of conflict necessarily prevails over everything, teaches everyone to adorn vice with the mask of virtue.”<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, Rousseau asserts that social life does not have to turn out so badly for man since nature also has provided him innate faculties suitable to his nature to allow him to realize his greatest potential in society. He maintains that nature has not only endowed man with innate passions that tend to his preservation but it has also given him sentiments relative to his species to attenuate self-love’s tendency to become tyrannical. He supports his claims with a lengthy argument based on the premise that man was born equal and free but his freedom prior to social life was that of “a narrow and stupid animal.”<sup>33</sup> Social life transforms man from a brute into “a creature of intelligence”<sup>34</sup> insofar as it is founded on a mutual contract among men who agreed to trade their natural independence for civil rights and the obligations appended to them. Thus, it is the more circumscribed freedom man acquires in society that elevates him from and makes him superior in dignity to the beast. The social compact is the means by which man realizes his nature as man. Consequently, Rousseau maintains that it is only in society that man is able to realize his nature and for this reason he is by his nature sociable. Man’s natural

sentiments, which are anterior to reason, bind him into a relation between himself and his fellows that constitutes a moral system from which the impulse of conscience is born.

Conscience is for Rousseau the “divine instinct [in man]... [the] certain guide of a being that is ignorant and limited but intelligent and free; [the] infallible judge of good and bad which makes man like unto God; it is [conscience] who make[s] the excellence of his nature and the morality of his actions.”<sup>35</sup> In short, it is man’s conscience, the sentiment that makes him love good and hate bad, which raises man above the brute and keeps him from surrendering his reason to opinions and prejudices. “I know that the exact proprieties and a superficial virtue would demand more... But I believe I have a more certain rule and I am holding to it. I listen secretly to my conscience; it reproaches me nothing, and it never leads astray a soul that consults it sincerely. If that is not enough to justify me in the world, it suffices to my own tranquility.”<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, conscience although independent of reason cannot be developed without it. The voice of conscience is reawakened in society by religion and man needs reason to understand religion, which can guide him to morality provided it is a religion untainted by opinions.

Man’s reason and his free-will, the faculties that lead him to know the good and make him choose it respectively, differentiate him from the beast but alone do not suffice to raise him above it. Left alone with his reason man would be led from error to error inasmuch as reason can be obscured by imagination, which is susceptible to the influence of opinion. Social life is full of corruption precisely because most men have forgotten nature’s language, which is the moral guidance each man receives from his conscience, the innate principle of justice and virtue that directs his actions with the aid of reason. Rather, most men listen only to their reason, which relates everything to the individual,

instead of heeding the voice of their conscience, which speaks to the common interest.

“Too often reason deceives us. We have acquired only too much right to challenge it.

But conscience never deceives us; it is man’s true guide. It is to the soul what instinct is to the body; he who knows conscience obeys nature and does not fear being led astray.”<sup>37</sup>

Rousseau thus shows that moral guidance, which makes social harmony and freedom possible, is not established by reason alone-- the faculty capable of leading man to knowledge of the good-- but is rooted in a natural sentiment, conscience-- the innate principle that makes us love the good and therefore to employ our liberty to choose it.<sup>38</sup>

Because the voice of conscience is extinguished in society, Rousseau proposes to lead men back to it by cultivating their reason so that their enlightenment progresses correlatively with each stage of their physical development. His pedagogical method is founded on the measure of man’s faculties at each stage of his development and the occupations that suit these faculties so that he learns to exercise his judgment with the discernment appropriate to his age. Thus, Rousseau argues that man is prepared to consider the great primordial questions that religion addresses only when the progress of his enlightenment leads him in that direction.

An upbringing that allows the natural passions to develop in accordance with nature’s slow and deliberate instruction makes the attainment of virtue possible because the senses, which are the first instruments of our knowledge, wake the imagination. But when contrary to nature the senses are prematurely aroused by imagination the natural passions are transformed into vices because what we feel is not shaped by the timely experiences and observations that animate imagination but by opinions, which enliven it prematurely and upset the natural progress of the mind. Because our faculties are limited

to the things that we can sense man remains closest to his natural goodness when he sees with his own eyes and feels with his own heart. Then the authority that governs him is not the passions and opinions of men but that of his reason. He remains as natural as possible, i.e., true to himself, when he is guided not by opinions but by his reason.

Consequently, Rousseau promotes an education that follows nature's timetable and is free from the encumbrances of science (which inspires man with the terror of death and makes him feel it ahead of its time), superstitions (which makes him believe gods will protect him in this life or provide him with another life), and social proprieties (which fill him with superfluous desires). All these notions invert nature's order by waking the imagination before the senses to produce a significant change in the moral perspective of man. They pervert consciousness thereby making man dependent and weak and transmute self-love into pride, vanity, ambition, anger, jealousy, envy, resentment and so on. "From the bosom of so many diverse passions I see opinion raising an unshakable throne, and stupid mortals, subjected to its empire, basing their own existence on the judgments of others."<sup>39</sup>

The natural development of the passions nourishes a strong and humane heart because it is an imagination untainted by opinion that makes us feel the ills of others while reflection, which brings us to see that we are not exempt from them, determines the judgment we make about them. By upsetting this natural process society fatally causes man to rely on opinions rather than his reason for his guide to moral virtue.

Rousseau believes that in society man needs virtue, or more specifically the ordering of self-love according to nature's instruction, to combat this tendency. As the origin of all the passions self-love is good when one remains master over it but it

becomes dangerous and harmful when succumbing to opinions man allows himself to become subjected to it. “They [our natural passions] are instruments of our freedom; they tend to preserve us. All those which subject us and destroy us come from elsewhere. Nature does not give them to us. We appropriate them to the detriment of our nature.”<sup>40</sup>

Self-love is the natural inclination that brings “every animal to watch over its own preservation, and which, directed in man by reason and modified by pity produces humanity and virtue.” Pity is the only natural virtue that Rousseau attributes to man. It softens the desire for self-preservation in primitive man and attenuates the ferocity of vanity, which “is only a relative sentiment, artificial and born in society [that] inclines each individual to have a greater esteem for himself than for anyone else, inspires in man all the harm they do to one another, and is the true source of honor.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, pity, the natural virtue, serves to regulate the primal passion, self-love, which degenerates in society into something bad by the application made of it and the relations given to it.

For Rousseau the unity of man consists in the wholesome equilibrium of self-love and pity with which nature has endowed him. His teaching aims to demonstrate that their harmonization leads to a happy life and he outlines how this concurrence can be achieved in society. More specifically, he wants to show that man’s actions acquire a moral quality when his sensibility begins to extend outside of himself beyond his own individuality to “take on, first, the sentiments and, then, the notions of good and evil which truly constitute him as a man and an integral part of his species.”<sup>42</sup>

Rousseau’s identification of the bourgeois, who is uniquely, involved with his preservation and well-being is meant to show that such a man is incapable of achieving the equilibrium that fosters a unified self. Turning a blind eye from human sufferings to

contemplate the deceptive images of human happiness contrived by opinions that enervate his imagination, his sensibility inclines him less to the sweetness of pity than to the bitterness of envy. Always regretting the goods he believes elude him he is incessantly in a state of conflict unable to bridge the chasm between his faculties and desires. The resulting dividedness he experiences between these two poles leads him to self-alienation while at the same time it foment his vanity making it impossible for him to recognize the common weakness and miseries he shares with all men and which turn the heart to humanity.

Social life enervates self-love's ability to order itself because opinions influence the imagination and obscure the universal ideas men have about good and evil. Thus, it is extremely important in society to restrain imagination by sentiment and reason. Reason must be developed as the opportunities arise to exercise it so that man may find "in [its cultivation] only what is necessary for him to live in society,"<sup>43</sup> and that means the power and will to direct self-love toward its natural inclination to beneficence. Rousseau differentiates between good self-love or *amour de soi*, which is good and useful in itself when guided by nature, and bad self-love or *amour-propre*, which is an adulteration of the first and a product of society.

*Amour de soi*, which recognizes necessity, is satisfied when our true needs are satisfied. "What makes man essentially good is to have few needs and to compare himself little to others; what makes him essentially bad is to have many needs and to depend much on opinion."<sup>44</sup> *Amour de soi* desires nothing beyond the satisfaction of man's physical needs and thus it is "inner-directed"<sup>45</sup> and conforms to man's natural goodness. As long as it remains a natural impulse to our preservation it produces strength

and independence in the individual. Rousseau believes that he who is strong does not do harm and according to him “[t]he only lesson of morality appropriate to childhood and the most important for every age is never to do harm.”<sup>46</sup> In sum, self-love is a tender plant, which must be nurtured through the cultivation of reason to produce a robust soul capable of regulating the passions and awakening the heart to the interest it has in loving the order that is the basis of a good conscience, the true source of happiness.

Rousseau’s notion of order is synonymous with goodness and justice, which are the attributes of God. “[T]he goodness of God is the love of order; for it is by order that He maintains what exists and links each part with the whole. God is just... it is a consequence of His goodness.”<sup>47</sup> Reason makes these divine principles evident to man when he contemplates God’s works, which is the only proof he has of God’s existence since he is otherwise limited by his understanding to know Him by His essence. By ordering himself and his actions according to the divine principles of goodness and justice man makes use of his faculties to attain the condition of happiness, strength and freedom that constitute the essence of virtue. Human justice emulates the order of divine goodness and justice insofar as it consists in generalizing one’s particular interest to make it more equitable. “[T]he good man orders himself in relation to the whole, and the wicked one orders the whole in relation to himself. The latter makes himself the center of all things; the former measures his radius and keeps to the circumference. Then he is ordered in relation to the common center, which is God, and in relation to all the concentric circles, which are the creatures.”<sup>48</sup> Of all the virtues, justice is for Rousseau the one that contributes most to the common good of men.



In contrast, *amour-propre* is the cultivation of one's ability to manipulate and control other men to do one's will. Its arbitrariness makes it inconsistent with order. It is a dangerous instrument that produces the self-centeredness that is antithetical to order. *Amour-propre* is never satisfied because it not only makes us prefer ourselves to others and relates everything to us even to the detriment of the rest of mankind, but it also makes the impossible demand that others prefer us to themselves.<sup>49</sup> It leads to an incessant urge to compare ourselves to others and when these comparisons are not favorable to us to envy them and prefer to be someone other than ourselves. In the first instance it engenders the desire for domination while in the latter it produces self-alienation. It feeds itself at the expense of other men and becomes pride in great souls and vanity in small ones and "[o]ften it wounds the hand making use of it and rarely does good without evil."<sup>50</sup>

Rousseau's solution for keeping *amour de soi* from degenerating into *amour-propre* is essentially to teach man from early childhood to have few needs, to be self-sufficient and to compare himself little to others. According to him, man falls into the snare of *amour-propre* when he has many needs and depends very much on opinion by subjecting his existence to the judgments of others. Yet, Rousseau concedes that since man has to live in society and will inevitably seek the esteem of others, he will succumb to *amour-propre* to some degree. Prompted by this realization, he endeavors to show that *amour-propre* can be moderated and transformed into a virtue by an education that cultivates the seed of pity rooted in every man's heart. A proper education can help direct *amour-propre* toward the good by teaching man to extend his heart to others and consecrate his care to their happiness instead of focusing solely on "the baseness of

private interest and the abjectness of the human *I* “<sup>51</sup> that contracts it. Rousseau speaks here of fostering compassion, which is not a virtue but a selfish passion that nonetheless creates a bond of affection among men because it is born out of the common miseries they all share.

Compassion is nourished by an education that awakens a child’s sensibility not only by showing him men by means of the accidents and vicissitudes of fortune common to the species but also by exposing him to the natural and civil inequalities that differentiate men within the social order. Such an education makes him feel his own vulnerability and then animates his imagination by transporting him out of himself to identify with the ills of others. It promotes his natural inclination to feel pity for the sufferings of others by calling on the first movements of his heart to awaken his conscience and enlighten his reason in order to temper the dangerous passions that *amour-propre* nurtures. This method “excite[s] in him goodness, humanity, commiseration, beneficence, and all the attractive and sweet passions naturally pleasing to men, and prevent[s] the birth of envy, covetousness, hate, and all the repulsive and cruel passions which make sensibility, so to speak, not only nothing but negative and torment the man who experiences them.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, Rousseau teaches it is possible to direct self-love toward goodness and human justice and affirms that “love of men derived from love of self is the principle of human justice.”<sup>53</sup> In sum, for him man enters the moral order not by listening to opinions, which include religion and its tendency to lead either to skepticism or fanaticism and their deleterious consequences, but in governing himself by “the true affections of his soul enlightened by reason” and it is by this “ordered

development of his primitive affections”<sup>54</sup> that he is able to form with other men the bonds of affection essential to social life.

**How for Tocqueville Opinion Reflects the Principles of Political Regimes: Under Equality Opinion Can Carry the Authority of Reason to Bring Man to Moral Virtue**

As the previous section shows Rousseau’s pedagogical method for directing self-love aims at providing man the capacity to rule himself through the exercise of his reason. Self-rule enables man to return as closely as possible to the condition of goodness and happiness he enjoyed prior to social life by setting him free from the fetters of opinion, which nourishes the passions and corrodes morality. However, because Rousseau premises his system of education on a study of human nature that is limited to an exclusive comparison between savage man and social man personified as the bourgeois he does not foresee the possibility that opinion can produce the contrary effect of restraining the passions under certain favorable social conditions.

In contrast, Tocqueville who owes his philosophical insight to Rousseau as well as Montesquieu broadens the scope of Rousseau’s teaching to illustrate that the effect of opinion on morality varies according to the motivating principles of political regimes. Taking the Anglo-American societies as his democratic model, Tocqueville opposes them to the revolutionary democracy of France and European aristocratic societies to show that an “enlightened” equality promotes moral opinions by dint of utility. Thus, it produces changes in social man’s manner of thinking and feeling that achieve comparable results to Rousseau’s proposed natural education.

Tocqueville adapts Rousseau’s teaching to his democratic theory by showing that equality of conditions causes man to experience on the one hand his individual weakness

and thus brings him *ipso facto* to compassion. On the other hand, it makes him call on the effort of his reason because his similarity to other men leads him to rely on “his own reason as the most visible and closest source of truth.”<sup>55</sup> This tendency leads to other habits of mind that not only give opinion the force of reason but also reinforces equality’s salutary effect on sentiment since “our sentiments depends on our ideas.”<sup>56</sup> It is from this change in perspective that Tocqueville is able to argue conversely that in democratic society opinion has the authority of reason.

Equality of conditions engenders for Tocqueville’s American an unprecedented environment in which common opinion assumes the eminence of reason and thus becomes synonymous with moral authority, paradoxically changing the premise of Rousseau’s teaching on opinion. Tocqueville argues that complete equality gives birth to a large number of “eager and anxious small proprietors”<sup>57</sup> whose unwavering desire to increase their well-being inclines them toward the orderly virtues that favor trade. This constantly growing middle-class, which constitutes the majority, possesses enough goods to desire order and to make it its principal affair to ensure that prevailing opinions are conducive to it. It is noteworthy that Tocqueville’s concept of order approximates that of Rousseau insofar as he associates it with the divine attributes that serve as model for human justice. Not unlike Rousseau he maintains that “the goal of God is order,”<sup>58</sup> and that man follows this principle when he confounds his particular interest with that of his community.

Rousseau’s bourgeois, who experiences self-love as *amour-propre* because his imagination is corrupted by opinion, must be taught to feel compassion whereas Tocqueville’s American is brought to this sentiment by the habit of mind he develops to

obtain the most benefit from his isolated social condition. The pervasiveness of equality among the Americans makes evident to each the precariousness of his fortune due to the constant movement of the social order, a condition that impels everyone to sense his own weakness and isolation. Tocqueville maintains that the state of weakness and isolation engendered by equality awakens the imagination of the American to his own likeness to others and brings him to understand what they feel and to judge them by himself. The commonality of sentiment Tocqueville's Americans share fuels in their heart a sensibility akin to natural pity, albeit a pity based on rational calculation and thus is closer to the selfish passion Rousseau calls compassion.

When ranks are almost equal in a people, all men having nearly the same manner of thinking and feeling, each of them can judge the sensations of all the others in a moment: he casts a rapid glance at himself; that is enough for him. There is therefore no misery he does not conceive without trouble and whose extent a secret instinct does not discover for him. It makes no difference whether it is a question of strangers or of enemies: imagination immediately puts him in their place. It mixes something personal with his pity and makes him suffer himself while the body of someone like him is torn apart.

In democratic centuries, men rarely devote themselves to one another; but they show a general compassion for all members of the human species. One does not see them inflict useless evils, and when they can relieve the sorrows of another without denying themselves much, they take pleasure in doing it; they are not disinterested but they are mild.

Although the Americans have so to speak reduced selfishness to a social and philosophical theory, they do not show themselves any less accessible to pity.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, the compassion of Tocqueville's American is a product of equality insofar as it is fostered by the common awareness that because all are alike each invariably experiences the vagaries of fortune and suffers its pains and miseries in his own turn. Tocqueville's perspective implies that equality affects the imagination in the same manner as Rousseau's meticulous education insofar as it leads man to virtue by transforming *amour-propre* into a sentiment of humanity fostered by compassion. This adaptation of Rousseau's teaching to the American democratic experience strongly suggests that compassion is within the reach of all democratic people since it is a consequence of a characteristic they all share: equality.

The lesson Tocqueville wants to convey to his French audience is that an enlightened equality like that of the Americans sees that it is in the interest of each to be concerned with his fellowmen because alone each is too weak to remain free. Tocqueville's compatriots are as blinded by their passions as Rousseau's bourgeois insofar as they are powerfully divided by the "envy, hatred and scorn of [their] neighbor..."<sup>60</sup> sentiments, which were produced by the prolonged conflict between the classes constituting the former aristocratic social structure and are perpetuated under a tenuous equality that clings to anachronistic principles of class differences.

"[Throughout the eighteenth century] [a]lthough the fate of the nobility and that of the bourgeoisie had been very different between them, they resembled each other in one respect: the bourgeois ended up living as

separated from the masses as the noble himself. Far from drawing himself closer to the peasants he fled from the contact of their miseries; instead of uniting himself closely to them to struggle together against their common inequality, he sought only to create new injustices for his own use: one sees him as passionate to procure for himself exceptions as the noble to maintain his privileges. These peasants, from whom he issued, had become for him not only strangers but in effect unfamiliar, and it was not until after he had put weapons into their hands that he noticed that he had excited passions of which he had not the faintest idea, passions he was as powerless to contain as to direct, and of which he was going to become the victim after having been their promoter.”<sup>61</sup>

In contrast, Tocqueville’s enlightened American experiences his equality in a way reminiscent of Rousseau’s citizen inasmuch as his imagination is guided by practical reason, which makes evident to him that the best way to secure his interest is to secure his freedom. He is cognizant that alone he is too weak to guard over his freedom and that the best way to secure it is to make the interest of his community his principal interest.

Tocqueville, not unlike Rousseau, is well aware that with the leveling of society has come a lowering of standards but Tocqueville, unlike Rousseau, accepts democratic mediocrity as a fact and thus is reconciled to bringing democratic man to virtue by accommodating the principle of utility that characterizes this regime. In the chapter titled “How the Americans Combat Individualism by the Doctrine of Self-Interest Well Understood” in Volume Two, Part Two, Chapter Eight, he argues that democratic morality is sustainable only if it takes into account the inclination of the democratic

imagination to focus on the material world. In short, it is evident to Tocqueville that expediency is the sole means by which to bring democratic men to virtue. Even if it is a virtue “not very lofty”<sup>62</sup> insofar as it does not lead to the potential for human greatness that he so admires in the aristocrat, it is nonetheless praiseworthy because it creates among men the bond of community essential to freedom.

Tocqueville’s studious observation of the American democratic experience convinces him that in centuries of enlightenment there is only one way to guide men to virtue: it is not by noble ideals but by a means that is within the reach of all intellects, the personal interest of each. He contrasts the method of the French who “still feigns great devotions every day that [he] has no longer”<sup>63</sup> by clinging to an anachronistic notion of virtue to the cleverness of American moralists who have capitalized on the habits of mind and sentiments equality already suggests to their countrymen to propagate the doctrine of self-interest well-understood. The first approach, which does not cohere with democratic values insofar as it relies on the aristocratic idea of beauty to bring men to morality, causes hateful passions to fester in a cesspool of hypocrisy that engenders disorder. In contrast the second is impregnated with pragmatism and thus contributes immensely to temper the American’s passion for well-being when it is in danger of transcending the bounds of order. The greatest appeal of the enlightened self-interest of the Americans remains for Tocqueville its ability to transform the passion for material well-being into a virtue that accommodates this democratic weakness.

Tocqueville’s hortatory message to nineteenth century French society, which he sees languishing in a moral and political vacuum, is that when a doctrine like that of



the self-interest well-understood of the Americans obtains a great empire over the minds of a democratic people it directs the passions by making use of the personal interest that incite them. Tocqueville is convinced that through the daily exercise of making little sacrifices, the American exchanges each day a part of his particular interest to save the rest thereby carving for himself through habit an indirect path toward the peaceful virtues that favor trade: love of order, temperance, moderation, farsightedness and self-mastery. If for Rousseau opinion holds sway over the passions, Tocqueville on the other hand finds that an enlightened opinion like the American doctrine of self-interest well-understood can restrain them.

The doctrine of self-interest entrenches itself easily in democratic society because it suits the mediocre inclinations of the “anxious and small proprietors” that constitute the middle-class. Once it takes hold in this class it is easily popularized precisely because it is the class among democratic peoples “that gives power to ideas and sets the tone of mores. It [this class] makes its opinion predominate everywhere at the same time as its will, and even those who are most inclined to resist its commands allow themselves in the end to be carried away by its example.”<sup>64</sup>

Tocqueville makes the important observation that the American middle-class maintains the stability of the state because it constitutes a powerful majority, which jealously guards “the singular fixity of certain principles” as a means to counterbalance “the great mobility of human actions”<sup>65</sup> to which democracy gives rise. In other words, like the Puritans of yore the majority opposes the arbitrariness of human laws to the constancy of religion’s moral laws. Thus, although Tocqueville’s American has abandoned the religious orthodoxy of his forebears, he is able to temper

the constant agitation of democratic public life with the calm of an immobile intellect, which is governed by the “force, at once material and moral”<sup>66</sup> of the majority. Put another way the majority constrains the intellectual freedom and will of the American within the circle it draws around thought. Anyone who has the temerity to venture outside of this circle incurs banishment by ostracism, a fate worse than death insofar as it attacks the soul while leaving the body intact

Common opinion has a formidable influence over the mind of each citizen under equality of conditions because it is the vehicle through which the majority promotes order in the interest of the material prosperity of all. It compels conformity primarily because public favor is indispensable to the social and economic survival of democratic man. Anyone who dares to challenge public opinion must be prepared to live with the scorn of his fellowmen and accept a more complete isolation than that which equality by its nature already imposes. Tocqueville maintains there is no freedom of mind in America precisely because the fear of disgrace is a strong deterrent for those who would want to express ideas contrary to those of the majority. For example, he avers that “[o]ne encounters non-believers in America, but disbelief finds so to speak no organ.”<sup>67</sup> The majority uses its omnipotence to enforce religious observance in the name of order and morality. “Religion itself reigns there [in America] much less as revealed doctrine than as common opinion.”<sup>68</sup> To put it another way, common opinion harnesses religion to promote order in the interest of the community.

During Tocqueville’s American tour he noted almost immediately the superior power of public opinion over the laws in religious and political matters. In the letter to Kergolay dated June 29, 1831, which has already been quoted numerous times in this

study, Tocqueville maintains that in matter of religious practices public opinion is much stronger than the law in compelling everyone to obey the “Judaic” observance of Church attendance on Sundays and abstain from all amusements.<sup>69</sup>

Likewise, public opinion imposes itself in matters of politics as exemplified by the following case of intimidation documented in his American travel journal. A passage of this journal relates that the state of Philadelphia had granted legal voting rights to Negro citizens who, to his surprise, seemed indifferent to the privilege of being granted this important political right by abstaining from presenting themselves at the polls. After inquiring into the reason for their apparent apathy he discovers that the Negroes feared retribution if they attempted to take advantage of these rights, because public opinion does not support the law. It is noteworthy that Tocqueville is well aware that public opinion can be misguided, irrational and immoral as in this case, which makes him fear the tyranny of the majority. Nevertheless, he maintains that as a general rule public opinion in America reflects the religious habits the nation inherited from the Puritans.<sup>70</sup>

Tocqueville provides a psychological reason for the opposed tendencies of equality to induce each man to think for himself in practical matters on the one hand, and on the other, to impel him to conform to opinion in matters where uniform standards are needed: equality makes man independent at the cost of isolation from his fellow citizen and thus leaves him weak and defenseless against the action of the greatest number. Recognizing that public opinion enjoys a formidable power in democracy that was inconceivable in aristocracy, he argues that it is the most appropriate vehicle to bring men to morality in this regime. He expresses with lyricism what for him remains a most memorable observation of American democracy: the unprecedented force of the public

to impose its will. “It [the public] does not persuade [one] of its beliefs, it imposes them and makes them penetrate souls by a sort of immense pressure of the minds of all on the intellect of each.”<sup>71</sup>

While Rousseau is unequivocal that reason must conquer opinion to free social man from the passions and superstitions that enslave him, Tocqueville turns his claim on its head by showing that under equality of conditions there is hardly a separation between opinion and moral authority: they very nearly fuse into one. Tocqueville’s assertion can be summarized as follows. The American accepts the opinion of the majority as the rule of reason because it is the collective judgment of his compatriots with whom he shares the same habit of mind generated by equality. If, on the one hand, equality leads him to put all the effort of his reason toward the pursuit of his material well-being, on the other it absorbs his soul entirely with matters of practical interest leaving him little leisure to think about anything else. Hence, the same equality that makes him rely on the effort on his reason in his personal affairs induces him to put an unlimited trust in the judgment of the public, with which he shares many similarities in all areas of common interest. For this reason, Tocqueville posits that where a complete equality of conditions prevails the minds of men are inclined naturally toward analogous ideas because it brings them to share similar needs, habits and taste and consequently to draw their judgment from the same source. In this way they remain within the bounds of reason even when they relieve themselves from the obligation to form their own opinion about “a great number of theories on matters of philosophy, morality, or politics that everyone thus adopts without examination, on the faith of the public.”<sup>72</sup>

“As men resemble each other more, the dogma of equality of intellect insinuates itself little by little into their beliefs.”<sup>73</sup> In turn, this notion leads them to conclude that “when all have the same enlightenment, truth [must be] on the side of the greatest number.”<sup>74</sup> This disposition of democratic people to believe in the infallibility of the mass is antithetical to the inclination of aristocratic people who “take the superior reason of one man or one class as a guide for their opinions.”<sup>75</sup> Thus, among democratic people universal reason is found to be a surer path to truth than individual reason in all matters not related to personal affairs and Tocqueville shows that when it is intermingled with the religious habits of the Americans it is a powerful source of moral authority. He proclaims that “common opinion [is] the sole guide that remains for individual reason among democratic peoples.”<sup>76</sup>

Tocqueville insists that the effect of equality on the intellectual habits of democratic citizens would not alone have given opinion the moral force to attenuate the passions without the contribution of two exceptional circumstances that are unique to America. The first is that religion, which “gave birth to the Anglo-American societies,” permeates all their habits and sentiments and the second is that religion exists “entirely distinct from the political order, in such a way that ancient laws could easily be changed without shaking ancient beliefs.”<sup>77</sup> In contrast, in France where religion and politics have always been intertwined, there is nothing to fill the moral vacuum that followed the democratic revolution, which jettisoned all ancient beliefs and traditions for new and untried ideas.

“We are proposing in this first part to give on the state of France,  
before the great Revolution of 1789, some explanations, without which the

actual state would be very difficult to understand... The Church of France under Louis XIV was all at the same time a religious institution and a political institution. In the intervening period that separated the death of this prince and the French revolution, beliefs having been gradually weakened, the priest and the masses became little by little strangers to each other. This change was produced by causes it would be too long to enumerate. At the end of the XVIII century the French clergy possessed still its goods; it meddled itself still with all the affairs of state; but it had in all parts lost control over the mind of the population, and the Church had become a political institution, much more than a religious institution.”<sup>78</sup>

Tocqueville’s empirical study of American democracy enables him to correct Rousseau’s view that opinion has an adverse effect on the passions insofar as he demonstrates, on the contrary, that common opinion can contain the passions under equality of conditions when it is founded on the autonomous authority of religion. Since it is invariable for him that the intellectual movement of equality leads to the intellectual empire of the majority, which will always be absolute in democratic people regardless of the political laws that govern them, he insists that public opinion directed by religion is a powerful tool for instituting order. “[I]n centuries of equality, one can foresee that faith in common opinion will become a sort of religion whose prophet will be the majority.”<sup>79</sup> Despite his fear of the potential of majority power to become tyrannical, Tocqueville maintains, nonetheless, that “the power [of majority opinion to impose order and morality in democracies] is doubtless good.”<sup>80</sup> Thus, by analogy he wants to show that French

common opinion can lead to results similar to those of America provided that religion operates exclusively in its own sphere, a condition essential for restoring the credibility of its authority.

**How Tocqueville's View regarding the Significant Contribution Woman Can Make to Democratic Order Is Modeled on Rousseau's Teaching on the Subjection of Woman to Opinion**

Despite the differences with Rousseau outlined above Tocqueville nevertheless remains a disciple of Rousseau in asserting that woman plays a pivotal role in directing and guarding democratic morality. As shown in the previous section Tocqueville sees that equality produces similar results as Rousseau's meticulous pedagogy to direct the sentiments and intellect of man toward reason. However, he also finds that equality, like the bourgeois society Rousseau castigates, has the disadvantage of blurring the distinctions that separate the sexes with deleterious consequences for social order. Therefore, while he finds no need to stress the standards of education for man he devotes a great deal of attention to that of woman to correct the erroneous democratic tendency to confound sexual equality with sameness. Tocqueville's attentive consideration of this matter is traceable to Rousseau and acknowledging this connection enriches the reader's understanding of his religious teaching and clarifies the meaning of his dictum: "the singular prosperity and growing force of this [American] people [should be principally attributed] to the superiority of its women."<sup>81</sup> Therefore, a small digression is necessary at this juncture to show how much Tocqueville is indebted to Rousseau in attributing social order in democracy to the opinions that regulate the conduct of women.

Rousseau finds in the inequalities that exist in the physical constitution of the sexes a natural and reasonable base for defining their separate obligations and this prompts him to establish an opposite standard for woman than man with respect to opinion. He argues that nature has made woman weak and man strong, but it has compensated her with the ability to turn her weakness into strength not only by giving her a greater facility to excite the desires than man has to satisfy them but also by “join[ing] modesty to these desires in order to constrain them.”<sup>82</sup> From this assertion he proceeds to demonstrate that in the human struggle to overcome the passions woman’s natural reserve is the equivalent of man’s reason. Consequently, he wants woman to make modesty rather than reason the foundation of her virtue. Furthermore, he affirms that since woman is the sex nature has charged with the bearing of children, reason dictates that she is accountable to the other sex for the children she bears. Thus, for Rousseau sexual difference determines intellectual and moral difference and in the case of woman her unique constitution makes her virtue not only a matter of good conduct but also one of reputation thereby making her dependent on the opinions of men.

Therefore, Rousseau’s system of education for woman follows a different track from the one he proposes for man because the honor of each sex inasmuch as it relates to opinion has completely different principles for him. The virtue of man, which is in him and his judgment alone, makes him despise the opinions and the prejudices of men. In contrast, the virtue of woman, which depends on the opinions of others, makes her respect these opinions because her reputation is measured by them. This difference is noteworthy in the context of a discussion on religion inasmuch as there exists for Rousseau an indissoluble connection between opinion and religion. “It is especially in



matters of religion that opinion triumphs.”<sup>83</sup> Therefore, unlike man, woman does not draw the rule of her beliefs from reason but from submitting to unexamined opinions as will become obvious below. Suffice it to say for now Rousseau is unequivocal that “[o]pinion is the grave of virtue among men and its throne among women.”<sup>84</sup>

As it should be clear to the reader by now, Rousseau’s teaching is founded on the principle that nature provides a certain roadmap to the human species for the attainment of order and all the goodness that flows from it. From this general principle he is able to argue that the conventional inequality of the sexes is both the work of nature, which has constituted them differently, and reason, which shows that their disparate constitutions are intended for different purposes. Thus, to make them equal by discounting these differences is to pervert nature’s order, which can only be maintained by taking into account the dissimilarities that allow the sexes to complement each other-- both physically and intellectually-- to accomplish nature’s end.

On this basis Rousseau maintains that social parity between the sexes is possible only when each sex follows individually his natural orientation. Man derives his power over woman from his greater natural physical strength but she counterbalances his power with her charms and her cleverness, which nature has given her to exploit his position of authority over her. In other words, woman is compensated for the power man has in his strength to subjugate her with the cleverness to enslave him with her charms and Rousseau aims to show that it is by using this capacity judiciously that she becomes his equal. It is by means of this talent that woman “keeps herself his [man’s] equal and governs him while obeying him.”<sup>85</sup> In sum, Rousseau teaches that social order is possible

only when woman and man understand their equality in the sense in which nature in her wisdom intended, i.e., by assuming the separate role it carved for them.

It is not difficult to trace in Rousseau's argument an undercurrent of sexism that fuels the vociferous denouncements of feminist adherents who argue that Rousseau's system of sexual difference is prejudicial to women since the "power" of modesty and ingenuity he grants them is the instrument of their subjugation. For example, Carole Pateman argues in the Sexual Contract that Rousseau makes modesty, "[which] is a precarious control of sexual desire," rather than reason the regulating moral faculty for woman to exclude her from participating in civil society.<sup>86</sup> This perspective dismisses with utter contempt Rousseau's overarching goal, which seeks "a natural base on which to form conventional ties,"<sup>87</sup> to stem the deleterious effects of bourgeois values on society. Yet, at the same time the feminist criticism is not entirely without merit insofar as it reminds us that Rousseau's system of sexual difference removes from woman the political means to combat man's tyranny. Paradoxically, Rousseau justifies his differentiated moral system on the converse consideration, which is based on the fear that without restraint woman would emasculate man.

"With so great an inequality in what each risks in the [sexual] union, how can one fail to see that if reserve did not impose on one sex the moderation which nature imposes on the other, the result would soon be the ruin of both, and mankind would perish by the means established for preserving it? For, given the ease with which women arouse men's senses...men would finally be their victims and would see themselves dragged to death without ever being able to defend themselves."<sup>88</sup>

To appreciate the merit of Rousseau's controversial position it must be viewed in the context of his broader argument, which maintains that the interdependence social life creates among men in public life and between man and woman in private life entails a system of cooperation that brings about a consciousness of obligation that is the basis of morality. Because the union of the sexes constitutes a microcosm of society the obligations for cooperation that make social life possible must therefore originate in private life where the most effective collaboration proceeds from taking into account the physical difference of the sexes. Furthermore, since the harmony that reigns in the familial hearth is the origin of social order, Rousseau puts a greater burden of restraint on woman because in his view her unfaithfulness far more than that of man dissolves the family. Her betrayal, which destroys the primary social bond insofar as her husband and offspring are uncertain of their legitimate ties to each other, gives rise to countless evils and social disorder. A man's waywardness having a far less pernicious impact on the family, Rousseau finds it necessary to "regulate her [woman's] views according to those of nature,"<sup>89</sup> which is another way of saying that her natural vocation of motherhood makes it necessary to place her merit in her modesty.

Viewed from this perspective the subjection of woman to the rule of opinion over her conduct facilitates her parity with man inasmuch as having far more to risk in their union, the command she exercises over herself and her impulses are the means by which she exercises control over man. Woman draws from the moral fortitude she needs to maintain her reputation the esteem and honor to judge man's merit and hence the implicit right to shape her social world. Thus, woman is less subordinated politically to man as it appears at first sight because she has in her exceptional conduct the power to motivate

man toward moral judgment and thus participate in the political decisions that affect her wellbeing. The merit of this viewpoint then is that it seeks to establish social harmony through a political compromise rooted in morality where modesty and reason complement each other and in this particular context it is unrivaled.

Under Rousseau's system of sexual difference woman governs men who are her judges by honoring herself and an honorable woman is one who loves purity and understands its value so that she judiciously avails herself above all to seek her happiness in her position, which means making modesty the motive for all her actions. As noted above woman's virtue and her honor are invested in her modesty because she is accountable to the other sex for the children she bears. Rousseau insists that woman's faithfulness on this matter is essential to the union of the family and by extension the well-being of society. "[T]he love of one's nearest [is] the principle of the love one owes to the state; [it is] by means of the small fatherland which is the family that the heart attaches itself to the large one."<sup>90</sup> Therefore, it is not enough for her to be chaste, gentle, docile and all the other qualities that constitute the sweetness of her character but she must be judged faithful by her husband and society. Unlike man, she is beholden to her conscience as she is to appearances and must not only make chastity foremost among her duties but also honor and reputation. Rousseau insists that once women abandon their duty, which is their modesty, they lose their ascendancy and their judgments having no longer any effects on men society becomes depraved.

Given woman's eminent position of moral stewardship in society Rousseau teaches that the education of woman ought to be contrary to that of man. However, his system of education for girls follows the same natural progression he formulates for boys,

i.e., to cultivate their body before their soul, albeit toward a different purpose that requires different means. For example, in the area of physical development the aim for boys is strength whereas for girls it is attractiveness. Likewise, in the moral realm the virtue of boys is fostered by developing their reason to prepare them to assume their civic duties whereas that of girls is formed by the industriousness and talent they need to fulfill their duties as wives and mothers.

Since woman has a different status than man, which is that of motherhood, her system of education must prepare her for her duties, which are all related to “[t]he obedience and the fidelity she owes her husband and the tenderness and care she owes to her children.”<sup>91</sup> The duties of woman include: “[t]o please men, to be useful to them, to make herself loved and honored by them, to raise them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, to make their lives sweet and agreeable.”<sup>92</sup> By entrusting woman with the vital role of shaping man’s character Rousseau shows that it is by fulfilling her obligations as he defines them that she extends her sphere of influence from the home to society at large. For this reason he believes that woman’s education should be devoted primarily to the refinement of her taste, which is the most certain path to lead her to the moral notions associated with the beautiful, to prepare her to assume her grave responsibilities as wife and mother.

Rousseau believes that the best way to cultivate the taste of girls is to regulate their natural propensity for coquetry, which left undirected contributes to immorality but properly guided promotes modesty and decency-- the virtues that enable them to establish their empire over man. This can be achieved by occupying them with the production of all the things associated with the adornment of women, e.g., sewing and lace-making, etc.

Knowledge of these crafts is useful insofar as it accustoms them to rely on their own industry and attaches them early to the cares that will occupy them in adulthood. They ought to perform these tasks under the loving eyes of their mother who they naturally want to emulate. The habitual constraint this tedious apprenticeship imposes on them breeds in them gentleness, which increases their power of persuasion and thus is useful to them in their subjection to men and their opinions. In sum, this training serves to instill in them the qualities that are essential to their happiness: vigilance, industriousness, and obedience. Thus, coquetry like *amour-propre* when properly cultivated is transformed from an all-consuming passion into a virtue.

It is not without coincidence that Rousseau directs woman and man by different means to virtue since unsurprisingly for him their physical constitutions determine their taste, which in turn directs their intellectual faculties toward different ends. Woman's taste directs her reason toward the practical whereas man's causes his to ascend to general principles. Their disparate conceptual abilities affect their individual competence to conceive the true idea of religion, which he must discover by the efforts of his reason while she practices the beliefs handed to her by an authority. Furthermore, man's strength and rearing, which give him a greater facility to be active, allow him to "see more objects and to judge the relations of sensible beings and the laws of nature."<sup>93</sup> In contrast, woman's weakness, which confines her in the home, reduces her to judging the forces to which she is submitted and these are the passions of men. This gives her a tremendous capacity to read in the hearts of men and thus to discover "experimental morality,"<sup>94</sup> which man reduces into a system. Their separate intellectual aptitude allows them to form a "partnership [that] produces a moral person of which the woman is the

eye and the man is the arm, but they have such a dependence on one another that the woman learns from the man what must be seen and the man learns from the woman what must be done...[I]n the harmony which reigns between them, everything tend to the common end...Each follows the prompting of the other; each obeys and both are masters.”<sup>95</sup>

Expanding the difference between the sexes beyond the physical to the intellectual has for Rousseau a practical ethical value, one that reasonably assumes that woman in her role as wife and mother has a tremendous influence over the moral content of man's thoughts even though it is he who-- through the discovery of abstract truths-- formulates the opinions that regulate society. Yet, even if woman participates indirectly in shaping opinions, she is held nevertheless to a different standard than man in her honor and reputation that warrants she safeguards these by submitting to the opinions of men in her conduct and an authority in her belief. Consequently, Rousseau introduces girls to religion at a much earlier stage in their development than boys since obedience and not reason is the sole measure of their faith. Because the religion of woman is ruled by authority Rousseau wants girls to follow the religion of their mothers who are their natural tutors and when their guardianship is transferred from their father to their husband to follow the latter's religion. This change does not affect their belief because he confines their religious instruction to the simple dogmas connected with morality, especially those that emphasize their duties and direct human beings toward the good. In short, the best way to achieve moral order and protect society from the insidious effects of impiety or fanaticism to which women are more susceptible than men is to take into account that the different inclination of women's intellectual faculties makes them

naturally less qualified than men to submit received opinions to the examination of their reason.

Nevertheless, Rousseau's overwhelming distrust of opinions leads him to make the cultivation of woman's reason the final stage of her education on grounds that are consistent with his teaching. The first is that reason is the faculty that brings us to know the good, which conscience makes us love and the rule of conscience "exists prior to opinion for the whole human species."<sup>96</sup> Woman then is subject foremost to the rule of the inner sentiment and she needs her reason to arbitrate between the rule of conscience and the rule of opinions when they are in conflict. The second flows from his belief that conjugal unions should be contracted on the basis of the natural suitability of the partners and he argues that woman needs an enlightened reason to judge the appropriateness of her choice, which greatly impacts her commitment to her duties as wife and mother. For Rousseau the matter of appropriate choice is extremely important since he blames the moral disorder of society partly on the conventional practice that focuses on marrying positions and wealth rather than persons. He believes there is a strong connection between the happiness of marriage and the morality of citizens because it is the sentiments of two people-- and not their positions and wealth-- that sustain a marriage through the vicissitudes of fortune. Therefore, Rousseau maintains that the ability to exercise her reason is as indispensable to woman as conforming to opinions to safeguard her honor.

I would not indiscriminately object to a woman's being limited to the labors of her sex alone and left in profound ignorance of all the rest.

But that would require very simple and very healthy public morals or a



very retired way of life. In big cities and among corrupt men such a woman would be too easy to seduce. Often her virtue would depend only on the occasion; in this philosophic age she needs a virtue that can be put to the test. She needs to know beforehand what might be said of her and what she ought to think about it.

Moreover, since she is the subject of the judgment of men, she ought to merit their esteem. She ought, above all, to obtain the esteem of her spouse. She ought to make him not only love her person but also approve her conduct. She ought to justify the choice he has made before the public and make her husband honored through honor given to his wife. How will she go about all this if she is ignorant of our institutions, if she knows nothing of our practices and our proprieties, if she knows neither the source of human judgments nor the passions determining them? As soon she depends on both her own conscience and the opinions of others, she has to learn to compare these two rules, to reconcile them, and to prefer the former only when the two are in contradiction. She becomes the judge of her judges; she decides when she ought to subject herself to them and when she ought to take exception to them. Before rejecting or accepting their prejudices, she weighs them. She learns to go back to their source, to anticipate them, to use them to her advantage. She is careful never to attract blame to herself when her duty permits her to avoid it. None of this can be done well without cultivating her mind and her reason.<sup>97</sup>

Tocqueville finds empirical evidence in America to corroborate Rousseau's theory that a well-ordered social life depends on defining the separate obligations of the sexes on the basis of their natural differences. "They [the Americans] have thought that since nature had established such great variation between the physical and moral constitution of man and that of woman, its clearly indicated goal was to give a diverse employment to their different faculties."<sup>98</sup> This claim on its own may not be definitive enough to establish Tocqueville as a disciple of Rousseau on this subject but combined with the following it brings his agreement with Rousseau into greater focus.

There are people in Europe who, confusing the diverse attributes of the sexes, intend to make man and woman into beings not equal but alike. They give them both the same functions, impose the same duties on them, and accord them the same rights...One can easily conceive that in thus striving to equalize one sex with the other, one degrades them both; and from this course mixture of nature's works, only weak men and disreputable women can ever emerge.<sup>99</sup>

Thus, it is unmistakable that Tocqueville echoes Rousseau insofar as he maintains that a division of labor on the ground of sexual difference is indispensable to social harmony in democracy.

Tocqueville believes without a doubt that the movement of democracy, which has eliminated most other forms of inequality, will not fail to end the social inequality of the sexes but he warns that sexual equality is not synonymous with likeness. He praises the American liberal notion of sexual equality, which divides the work of society into two separate spheres where men and women each make an equal contribution based on their

natural abilities. “Americans have applied to the two sexes the great principle of political economy that dominates industry in our day. They have carefully divided the functions of man and woman in order that the great social work be better done.”<sup>100</sup>

Rousseau’s influence on Tocqueville is as palpable here as elsewhere with regard to the significance he ascribes to the habit of cooperation that regulates family relations in America. This habit is reproduced in the political community with far-reaching implications for the ideas that set the tone of opinions. Rousseau’s teaching emphasizes that each gender must be educated with the view to their respective social responsibility not only because this method complies with nature’s intended goal for each sex to have a different role but also because it provides the best means for establishing order in society. His conviction on this matter is unvarying as shown in the two separate texts below.

[One arrives at] prevent[ing] a dangerous familiarity between the two sexes by giving them entirely different occupations, habits, tastes, pleasures... [W]oman and her husband are destined to live together, but not in the same manner; they have to act in concert without doing the same things...[T]he inclinations that nature gives them are as diverse as the functions that it imposes on them; their amusements are no less different than their duties; in a word, both of them contribute to the common happiness by different paths; and this sharing of labor and care is the strongest link in their union.<sup>101</sup>

He reiterates the same principle in a separate work.

In following nature’s directions, man and woman ought to act in concert, but they ought not to do the same things. The goal of their labors

is common, but their labors themselves are different, and consequently so are the tastes directing them... All the faculties common to the two sexes are not equally distributed between them; but taken together they balance each other out. Woman is worth more as woman and less as man... To cultivate man's qualities in women and to neglect those which are proper to them is obviously to work to their detriment.<sup>102</sup>

Nevertheless, Tocqueville does not go as far as Rousseau whose understanding of sexual difference emphasizes also a great intellectual gap between man and woman that warrants placing her almost entirely under the yoke of opinion. In fact he goes to great length to show that American women derive their superiority from an education that cultivates first and foremost their reason. One way to interpret this shift from Rousseau--whose pedagogy puts primary emphasis on cultivating a girl's taste to lead her to virtue--is to contemplate as Tocqueville does the particular challenge posed by democracy where individual independence penetrates every layer of society, tastes are mottled, custom changing and opinion often uncertain.<sup>103</sup> These democratic peculiarities, among others, lead Tocqueville to search for a different path to virtue for woman than Rousseau and he is not surprised to find that "[a]lthough Americans are a very religious people, they have not relied on religion alone to defend the virtue of woman; they have sought to arm her reason."<sup>104</sup>

Another ostensible motive for this modification may be rooted in Tocqueville's ambivalent position as philosopher and *homme politique*. In the latter role he probably wants to distance himself publicly from Rousseau on the controversial subject of an intellectual difference between the sexes even though in his Recollections he shows that

privately he shares Rousseau's view. "I was strongly prejudiced against Madame [George] Sand, for I loathe women who write, especially those who systematically disguise the weaknesses of their sex, instead of interesting us by displaying them in their true character."<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, what is important here is that his teaching diverges from Rousseau on the issue of a gender-based intellectual disparity and as is generally the case he adduces the American example as the prototype to be followed in democracy. "They [the Americans] judge that her mind is as capable as a man's of discovering the naked truth, and her heart firm enough to follow it; and they have never sought to place the virtue of the one more than the other under the shelter of prejudices, ignorance, or fear."<sup>106</sup>

Yet, if Tocqueville disagrees with Rousseau on the preeminent method for bringing woman to virtue, he agrees wholeheartedly with him that modesty ought to be the object of her virtue and that the best way to safeguard her chastity is to cultivate her reason. He explains that this adjustment is necessitated by the new social circumstances created by equality of conditions. Democratic independence minimizes considerably paternal authority and facilitates conjugal unions based on the natural suitability of the partners by removing "all the imaginary or real barriers that separate man from woman."<sup>107</sup> This unprecedented independence not only encourages people to marry across social boundaries but it also creates opportunities for improprieties. Therefore, woman needs a sound judgment to keep her from succumbing to the credulity of passions and to understand she has a powerful motive to withhold her favors for the man who shows his preference by his willingness to marry her. Still, it is with nostalgia that Tocqueville advocates a manly education for girls in democracy even as he argues that it

is necessary for stemming the moral degeneracy that impeded France from achieving liberty for fifty years.

I know such an education is not without danger; nor am I ignorant that it tends to develop judgment at the expense of imagination and to make women honest and cold rather than tender spouses and amiable companions of man. If society is more tranquil and better regulated for it, private life has often fewer charms. But those are secondary evils that ought to be faced for a greater interest. Having come to the point where we are, we are no longer permitted to make a choice; we need a democratic education to safeguard woman from the perils with which the institutions and mores of democracy surrounds her.<sup>108</sup>

Tocqueville credits the education of American girls for fostering the regular habits he finds in their country because it prepares them well to assume the duties of womanhood. The independence they enjoy in girlhood exposes them to the corruption and vices of the world giving them a tremendous power of discernment to negotiate with calm and confidence the perils of society. Moreover, they are made acutely aware by an inexorable public opinion that reflects the religious beliefs and commercial habits of their countrymen that woman's first obligation is to preserve the sanctity of the conjugal bond. Therefore, they "marry only when their reason is exercised and mature."<sup>109</sup>

In contrast, European women fall into the bonds of marriage totally unprepared to face their obligations by the almost cloistered education designed for girls in aristocratic times. Unlike American women who willingly renounce worldly pleasures to seek their happiness solely within the conjugal dwelling once they commit to marriage, European

women are not only ill-equipped to face “the disorders inseparable from a democratic society”<sup>110</sup> but are also eager to exploit the greater independence womanhood bestows upon them. This problem is compounded by the anachronism of making marriage an occasion to unite the fortunes of the parties thus “leav[ing] their hearts to wander about aimlessly”<sup>111</sup> instead of making it a means to cement a bond based on the similarity of tastes and ideas that ought to unite a man and a woman. Tocqueville blames the failure to make the education of girls coeval with democratic needs and a stubborn adherence to aristocratic marital conventions for the “great number of passing and clandestine unions”<sup>112</sup> that fuel the disorder that plagues French democratic society.

In defining the limits of sexual equality in democracy by comparing America and France Tocqueville aims to achieve the following objectives: 1) underline, like Rousseau, the connection between private and public morality; and 2) show to the detractors of democracy in France that equality does not produce immorality and irreligion, rather it brings them to light where they already exist. This contrast enables him to show on the one hand that the way in which the Americans understand the equality of the sexes fosters social order and on the other it strengthens the social standing of women far more than the licentiousness that is ostensibly confounded with equality in Europe but in reality demeans women by assuming they are weak and seductive.

In the first instance, Tocqueville wants to underscore that woman’s faithfulness is the principal counterbalance to democratic instability and disorder for the same reason advanced by Rousseau, i.e., “the little society of husband and wife” is the foundation of “the great political society.”<sup>113</sup> He relies on the American model as well as Rousseau’s

system of natural difference to show the practicality of making man the head of this little society. He argues that since “the object of democracy is to regulate and legitimate all necessary powers, not to destroy all power” the Americans have found efficacious to make man “the natural head of the [marital] association,” to avoid “the [social] consequence of overturning marital power.”<sup>114</sup>

In contrast to European girls who receive an “aristocratic” education that leaves them ill-prepared to assume their duties, American girls are prepared by their “democratic” education to accept conjugal authority because they submit to it of their own free will after carefully reviewing their options with cold reason. Thus, for Tocqueville the strength of will woman needs to meet her democratic obligations makes it imperative that she receives an education that forms her reason. Moreover, like Rousseau he maintains that her intellectual faculties must be developed for the sake of putting her in an advantageous position to choose well when the time comes for the grave decision of finding her lifelong companion since the happiness of the home extends to society at large. Tocqueville follows the tradition of Rousseau by showing that there is an unmistakable connection between private morality and public virtue.

In the second place, Tocqueville wants to show that the disorder in France is not produced by democracy *per se* but instead by the difficulty of replacing a system of traditional inequality with equality of conditions. He supports his assertion by adducing the complete reversal in the relation between social standing and respect for old habits and aged beliefs to be found in the new social order. Following the impoverishment of the nobles by the Revolution the formerly dissolute aristocracy forced to occupy themselves with the serious business of managing their affairs assimilated the democratic



habits that contribute to the success of this endeavor: respect for religious beliefs and love of order and peaceful enjoyments. Ironically, the other classes which naturally had these tastes lost them “by the very effort that had to be made to overthrow laws and political customs.”<sup>115</sup> This social analysis of France’s fifty years encounter with democracy reinforces Tocqueville’s argument that democratic order can be sustained only by moral habits and religious beliefs.

It is not equality of conditions that renders men immoral and irreligious. But when men are immoral and irreligious at the same time that they are equal, the effects of immorality and irreligion are readily produced outwardly, because men have little effect on one another and no class exists that takes charge of policing society. Equality of conditions never creates the corruption of mores, but sometimes allows it to appear.<sup>116</sup>

**How Tocqueville Collapses Rousseau’s Dichotomous Teaching on Opinion to Show that an Enlightened Equality Steers Public Opinion Closer to Moral Law**

In his examination of virtue in the chapter titled “On Honor in the United States and in Democratic Societies” in Volume Two, Part Three, Chapter Eighteen of Democracy in America, Tocqueville concedes to Rousseau that the opinions of man have not been guided historically by a universal notion of justice. He analyses the actions men honor in different political regimes to show that the opinions that govern these actions generally run counter to the natural order of conscience insofar as they are grounded in the arbitrary needs of particular associations or regimes. However, Tocqueville diverges from Rousseau by narrowing the focus of his enquiry to demonstrate that opinion

complies with reason the more conditions are equal and deviates from it the more they are unequal. He affirms that in democracies where the needs and interests of society are generalized, human opinions tend to be more reasonable and just than in aristocratic societies where these interests are particularized. Yet, despite their differing perspectives Tocqueville's conclusion vindicates Rousseau's claim that "[i]t is useless to separate the morals of a nation from the object of its esteem; for both spring from the same principle and both necessarily merge together... To judge morals is to judge what is honoured; to judge what is honoured, is to look to opinion as law."<sup>117</sup>

Tocqueville gives concrete meaning to Rousseau's dictum by analyzing in this chapter democratic society in France from the perspective of the aristocratic order that preceded it and contrasting it with the eminently democratic social state of the Americans. This comparison shows that under inequality of conditions the rules of honor not only grow *pari passu* with class interests but they also prescribe a complete and detailed code for human actions aimed specifically at maintaining the nobility in its dominant social position at the expense of moral law. Hence, in a hierarchical society the rules of honor are often arbitrary and inconsistent with the holy law that distinguishes good from evil. For example, Tocqueville maintains that if the particular and temporary interest of a people or a class conflicts with the foremost law of morality, which he agrees with Rousseau can be summed as "never to harm anyone,"<sup>118</sup> it will not hesitate to excuse and even honor homicide. In contrast, under equality of conditions where ranks are commingled and class privileges abolished honor is less capricious because its precepts are few and ill-defined and consequently tend to be "less and less distant from the moral laws adopted by common humanity."<sup>119</sup>

It is noteworthy that despite its lack of intrinsic moral value Tocqueville exonerates aristocratic honor, which prizes indiscriminately the virtues and vices that gave it greatness and luster, because he maintains society was compensated for its injustice inasmuch as the aristocrat had a sublime idea of the duties of man. He admires the aristocrat's ingrained sense of duty for its potential to actualize itself into great and noble deeds, an important quality for Tocqueville who welcomes democracy's system of justice but regrets that it only produces mediocrity. He is certain that without vigilance democracy will lead man inevitably to despotism. Unreflectively, Tocqueville's esteem for a convention that was often inconsistent with moral law could at first glance be construed as the automatic reflex of his aristocratic instinct. However, closer scrutiny of his analytical method reveals that he values aristocratic honor primarily because it commanded self-mastery, the essential quality that makes Rousseau's citizen a moral being.

Tocqueville carefully crafts his argument to show that the courage to order oneself to fulfill one's duties is both a characteristic of honor and virtue, with the caveat that honor differs from virtue insofar as the latter is ruled by a universal law of morality whereas the former being coeval with conventional inequalities is always capricious. Moreover, honor "only acts in public view" and thus succumbs to vanity whereas virtue is self-sustaining and "is satisfied with its own witness."<sup>120</sup> Otherwise, both rely on a code of regulations to guide human actions.

Tocqueville adduces Roman republican honor to underline that honor is always ruled by needs and interests that change according to time and place. For example, the Romans judged human actions according to the status of the agent, i.e., whether he was a

citizen, a foreigner, a free man or a slave, and prized virtues and vices that were useful to Rome's ambition to conquer the world. Likewise, feudal aristocratic honor attributed a different value to the actions of a man depending on his status as noble or commoner. The analogy between Rome and aristocratic France reveals that under a system of conventional inequalities public esteem is won indistinguishably by virtue or vice as long as it fosters the glory of the dominant class.

By affirming that honor is established by conventions to create and preserve the hierarchic distinctions that contribute to order, Tocqueville wants to show that as a concept it can be transmuted to achieve the same end in democracy without compromising this regime's inclination to harmonize more or less with "the general reason and the universal conscience of the human race."<sup>121</sup> Tocqueville combines the lessons of Montesquieu's principles of government with Rousseau's teaching on opinions to argue that the notion of honor may be weak and its rules ill-defined in democracy but it can remain a powerful motive for regulating human actions if it accords with the organizing principle of this regime. This construction enables him to show by analogy that if aristocratic hierarchy produced a rigid code of honor that was the foundation of order under a system of inequality, then opinions that support the natural differences of man and woman are the most reasonable way to order social life under a system of equality. Thus, the obligations associated with honor, which heretofore derived their legitimacy from conventional inequalities, are adjusted in democracy so that their authority now becomes grounded in the natural differences of the sexes to effect a moral change in the way in which virtues and vices are classified.

Tocqueville contrasts the American and French concept of honor to support this innovation. The American makes a virtue of the pursuit of wealth whereas the French looks upon it as a vice inasmuch as this view conforms to the aristocratic notion that idleness is preferable to remunerative occupation because it is a mark of social distinction. Analogously, there is a striking difference between the American and French aristocrat's view of courage. "The American calls noble and estimable ambition that which our fathers in the Middle Ages named servile cupidity, just as he gives the name of blind and barbaric fury to the conquering ardor and warlike humor that threw them into new combats each day."<sup>122</sup> It is noteworthy that Tocqueville harbors an instinctive aristocratic distaste for the American's obsession with making a fortune, especially because it is an occupation that inevitably encourages cupidity.<sup>123</sup> Nevertheless, he recognizes that America's passion for wealth fosters order by establishing a code of honor based on sexual difference that is critical to the success of the country's commercial interest.

Since the Americans present the most complete image of a modern democratic society, Tocqueville adduces the American notion of honor that prevails in common opinion as a model for democratic nations inasmuch as it emphasizes regular habits that lead to order. American public opinion values the courage it takes to order the self toward chastity and industriousness because they are the virtues that foster the commercial and industrial interests of the nation and contribute to its greatness. The self-discipline on which these virtues depend provides a powerful counterbalance to the American's passion for wealth at the same time that it enables its fulfillment. Thus, American public opinion could be said to be as incoherent as the opinion that regulates

aristocratic honor insofar as it displays a relaxed morality regarding the passion for wealth but an unsurpassed austerity for the “the vices that are of a nature to adulterate the purity of morals and to destroy the conjugal union.”<sup>124</sup> But Tocqueville insists that though incoherent it is not arbitrary because it draws its moral prerogative from the natural separation of sexual labor that fosters order in family life and by extension society at large.

In contrasting aristocratic honor and American public opinion Tocqueville aims to goad France to recognize that, for better or worse, democracy has redefined the parameter within which social order is possible by constituting it along gender lines rather than class lines. This new social organization can be enforced only by appeal to moral law, which religion provides more consistently than human laws in democracies. He maintains that the power of honor to “rule the will more than belief”<sup>125</sup> has diminished significantly in democracies. The opinions that rule honor in democracies, though never clear and consistent, are all the more confused in France where democracy exists under tenuous social conditions.

[I]n a democratic country like ours where the different classes that composed the former society come to mix together without yet being able to blend with each other, and introduce diverse and often contrary notions of their honor to one another every day; where each man following his caprices, abandons one part of the opinions of his fathers and retains another, so that in the midst of so many arbitrary measures a common rule can never be established.<sup>126</sup>

Tocqueville attributes the situation in France to the upheaval caused by the Revolution, which has left society subsisting on the one hand in the twilight of conventional inequalities and on the other with a confused understanding of sexual equality. France can regain her former glory only when she begins to accommodate the needs of her new social state and for Tocqueville that means bringing democracy and religion into harmony to guide opinions.

Tocqueville's analysis of honor far from disproving Rousseau's dichotomous view of opinion confirms it insofar as it shows that an enlightened equality facilitates social justice and fosters compassion and modesty even if democratic virtue is grounded in utility. Tocqueville praises American honor because it reproves the laxity of morals so dangerous to the well-being and prosperity of society even as it condones the country's passion for wealth. Thus, by acknowledging Tocqueville's debt to Rousseau on this important subject the reader is able to put in context his belief that the only way to achieve order in democracy is to imbue public opinion, which has the force of reason, with religious morality.

---

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile or On Education, intro. and trans. Allan Bloom, (New York: Basic Books., Inc., Publishers, 1979), bk. 4, 330.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., bk. 4, 240-331 passim.

<sup>3</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract, trans. and intro. Maurice Cranston, (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), bk. 2, chaps. 6 & 7, 80-88.

<sup>4</sup> Rousseau, Emile, bk. 4, 295.

<sup>5</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, trans. & ed. Harvey C. Mansfield & Delba Winthrop, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), vol. 2, pt. 1, chap. 1, 404. Also see Alexis de Tocqueville, De la démocratie en Amérique II, Oeuvres, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, ed. André Jardin with Jean-Claude Lamberti and James T. Schleifer, (Paris: editions Gallimard, 1992), vol.2, pt. 1, chap. 1, 514. (Henceforth references to this work will appear as DA, volume, part, chapter for both the English translation and French text with the page of the English translation appearing before that of the French text and the two separated by a slash, e.g., DA, II, 1, 1, 404/514).

<sup>6</sup> The Social Contract, bk. 2, chap. 7, 84.

<sup>7</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Letter to Arthur de Gobineau, January 24, 1857, in Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et d'Arthur de Gobineau, texte établi et annoté par M. Degros, intro. J. J. Chevalier, avertissement de J. P. Mayer, (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), tome IX, 280. (Hereafter reference to this work will be shown as OC IX). See also "The European Revolution" & Correspondence with Gobineau, intro., ed. & trans., John Lukacs, (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1959), 309.



---

<sup>8</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, letter to Francisque de Corcelle, September 17, 1853, in Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Francisque de Corcelle, correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Madame Swetchine, volume établi par Pierre Gibert et soumis pour contrôle et approbation à Claude Bressollette et André Jardin, (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), tome XV, 81. (Hereafter reference to this work will appear as OC XV).

<sup>9</sup> "The European Revolution" & Correspondence with Gobineau, chap. 5, 78.

<sup>10</sup> DA, II, 3, 11, 572/723-724.

<sup>11</sup> DA, II, 2, 15, 519/658.

<sup>12</sup> Letter, October 11, 1853, in OC IX, 199-200. See also "The European Revolution" & Correspondence with Gobineau, 224.

<sup>13</sup> The Social Contract, bk. 3, chap. 4, 113.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, bk. 3, chap. 5, 115.

<sup>15</sup> I owe this insight to Allan Bloom. See his introduction to Emile or On Education, 4.

<sup>16</sup> DA, 6/7.

<sup>17</sup> The Social Contract, bk. 3, chap. 4, 113.

<sup>18</sup> See Rousseau, Emile, bk. 4, 221.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, bk. 2, 85.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, bk. 1, 40.

<sup>21</sup> The Social Contract, bk. 4, chap. 8, 186.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, bk. 1, chap. 8, 64-65.

<sup>23</sup> See Maurice Cranston's introduction to the The Social Contract, 25.

---

<sup>24</sup> In a letter to Francisque de Corcelle, December 28, 1854, Tocqueville criticizes the bull “*Ineffabilis Deus*” of December 8, 1854 in which Pope Pius IX proclaimed that belief in the mystery of the “immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary” is a necessary condition to remain Catholic. “I know that the opinion that they have just made obligatory was very old and very respectable; but to impose today, at the end of nearly 2000 years, [this] belief in a mystery, it appears to me very foolish and I admit that a formal council, and even a general council, would have appeared to me out of line to introduce this novelty in the Church. I call novelty the obligation to believe a mystery in which until now one did not have to submit to remain Catholic. OC XV, 129.

Cf. Tocqueville’s view with the following from Rousseau. “If our dogmas are all of equal truth, they are not for that reason all of equal importance... Whether a virgin is the mother of her Creator, whether she gave birth to God or only to a man with whom God joined Himself, whether the substance of the Father and the Son are the same or only similar, whether Spirit proceeds from one of these two who are the same or from both conjointly- I do not see that the decision about these apparently essential questions is more important to the human species than knowing on what day of the moon one ought to celebrate Easter, whether one ought to tell one’s beads, fast, abstain from meat, speak Latin or French in church, adorn the walls with images, say or hear Mass, and not have a wife of one’s own. Let each person think about these things as he pleases.” Rousseau, Emile, bk. 5, 380-381.

<sup>25</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, The Recollections of Alexis de Tocqueville, trans. Alexander Teixeira de Mattos, ed., intro., J. P. Mayer, (London: the Harvill Press, 1948), 2-3.

<sup>26</sup> See DA, II, 2, 14, 517/655.

---

<sup>27</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, The Old Regime and the Revolution, trans. Alan S. Kahan, ed., intro. and critical apparatus by François Furet and Françoise Mélonio, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), vol., I, 87-88.

<sup>28</sup> DA, II, 2, 2, 14, 515/653.

<sup>29</sup> “From where does man’s weakness come? From the inequality between his strength and his desires. It is our passions that make us weak, because to satisfy them we would need more strength than nature gives us. Therefore, diminish desires, and you will increase strength. He who is capable of more than he desires has strength left over; he is certainly a very strong being.” Rousseau, Emile, bk. 3, 165.

Rousseau takes up the theme of moral corruption as weakness also in the “First Discourse” in which he argues that the sciences, letters and arts soften character and thus pave the way to the corruption of morals. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The First and Second Discourses, trans., Roger D. and Judith Masters, ed. Roger D. Masters, (New-York: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), 34-36.

<sup>30</sup> See Rousseau, Emile., bk. 4, 291 and bk. 5, 544.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, bk. 2, 80.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, bk. 4, 315.

<sup>33</sup> The Social Contract, bk. 1, chap. 8, 64.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Rousseau, Emile, bk. 4, 290.

---

<sup>36</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julie ou La nouvelle Héloïse: Lettres de deux amants, habitants d'une petite ville au pied des Alpes, (Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1952), tome I, 3ème partie, 376.

<sup>37</sup> Rousseau, Emile, bk. 4, 286-287.

<sup>38</sup> See Ibid., bk. 4, 294 and also Julie, tome I, 3ème partie, 398.

<sup>39</sup> Rousseau, Emile, bk. 4, 215.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., bk. 4, 212.

<sup>41</sup> The First and Second Discourses, 221, note (o) to the "Second Discourse."

<sup>42</sup> Rousseau, Emile, bk. 4, 219-220.

<sup>43</sup> The "Second Discourse" in The First and Second Discourses, 228.

<sup>44</sup> Rousseau, Emile, bk. 4, 214.

<sup>45</sup> I owe this great insight to Allan Bloom. In his introduction to the Emile, Bloom credits Rousseau as the source of the tradition, which replaces virtue and vice as the causes of being good or bad, happy or miserable with contrasting terms such as, *inter alia*, inner-directed/other-directed, real-self/alienated self. Ibid., 4

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., bk. 2, 104.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., bk. 4, 285.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., bk. 4, 292.

<sup>49</sup> See *ibid.*, bk. 4, 213-214.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., bk. 4, 244-245.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., bk. 4, 312, note.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., bk. 4, 223.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., bk. 4, 235.

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> DA, II, 1, 1, 404/514.

<sup>56</sup> Rousseau, Julie, tome II, 6ème partie, 278.

<sup>57</sup> DA, II, 3, 21, 608/771.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., II, 2, 9, 504-505/640.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 1, 538/680.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., II, 1, 1, 406/517.

<sup>61</sup> Tocqueville, The Old Regim, bk. II, chap. 12, 191.

<sup>62</sup> DA, II, 2, 8, 502/637.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., II, 2, 8, 502/636.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 8, 560/708.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 21, 611/775.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, I, 2, 7, 243/292.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., I, 2, 7, 245/294-295.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., II, 1, 2, 409/521.

<sup>69</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Louis de Kergolay, ed. J. P. Mayer, texte établi par André Jardin, intro. & notes Jean-Alain Lesourd, (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), tome XIII, 227. (Hereafter reference to this work will be noted as OC XIII).

<sup>70</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Journey to America, trans. George Lawrence, ed. J. P. Mayer, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1959), 225. See also Alexis de Tocqueville, "Voyage en Amérique" in Oeuvres I, Bibliothèque de La Pléiade, édition publiée sous la direction

---

d'André Jardin avec pour ce volume la collaboration de Françoise Mélonio et Lise Quéffelec, (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), 243-244.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 21, 613/777.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., II, 1, 2, 409/521.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., II, 1, 1, 406/516-517.

<sup>78</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, "Etat social et politique de La France avant et après 1789" in L'Ancien régime et la révolution, preface, note, bibliographie, chronologie par Françoise Mélonio, (Paris: Flammarion, 1988), 1ère partie, 47.

<sup>79</sup> DA, II, 1, 2, 410/522.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., I, 2, 7, 245/295.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 12, 576/729.

<sup>82</sup> Rousseau, Emile, bk. 5, 359.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., bk. 4, 260.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., bk. 5, 365.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., bk. 5, 371.

<sup>86</sup> See Carole Pateman, The Sexual Contract, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 96-102 passim.

<sup>87</sup> Rousseau, Emile, bk. 5, 363.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., bk. 5, 358-359.

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., bk. 5, 365.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., bk. 5, 363.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., bk. 5, 382.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., bk. 5, 365.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., bk. 5, 387.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., bk. 5, 377.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., bk. 5, 382.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., bk. 5, 383.

<sup>98</sup> DA, II, 3, 12, 574/726.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 12, 573-574/725-726.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 12, 574/726.

<sup>101</sup> Rousseau, Julie, tome II, 4ème partie, 63-64.

<sup>102</sup> Rousseau, Emile, bk. 5, 363-364.

<sup>103</sup> See DA, II, 3, 9, 564/713.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 9, 565/714.

<sup>105</sup> Tocqueville, The Recollections of Alexis de Tocqueville, 158.

<sup>106</sup> DA, II, 3, 12, 575/727.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 11, 568/719.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, II, 3, 9, 565/714.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, II, 3, 10, 566/716.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 9, 564/713.

---

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 11, 569/720.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 11, 568/719.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 12, 574/727.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 12, 574/726-727.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 11, 573/724.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., note XXI, 701/note a 2, 1143.

James T. Schleifer's note in the French text is different than that found in the Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop's English translation. A review of Tocqueville's manuscript leads Dr. Schleifer to conclude that he is here responding to Montesquieu.

"Therefore, when the physical power of certain climates violates the natural law of the two sexes and that of intelligent beings, it is for the legislator to make civil laws which forcefully oppose the nature of the climate and reestablish the primitive laws."

Montesquieu, The Spirit of the Laws, trans. & ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller and Harold Samuel Stone, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pt. 3, bk. 16, chap. 12, 273. Dr. Schleifer comments that Tocqueville opposes himself only to a very deterministic interpretation of Montesquieu's work.

<sup>117</sup> The Social Contract, bk. 4, chap. 7, 174.

<sup>118</sup> Rousseau, Emile, bk. 2, 104. Cf. Tocqueville's statement: "The general and permanent interest of the human race is that men not kill one another." DA, II, 3, 18, 590/746.

<sup>119</sup> DA, II, 3, 18, 596/754.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 18, 598/757.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 18, 594/751.



---

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, II, 3, 18, 594/751-752.

<sup>123</sup> During Tocqueville's tenure in the Chamber of Deputies, which begun in 1839, he witnessed the worse abuses that eventually ended the reign of King Louis-Philippe (1830-1848) otherwise known as the "bourgeois-King." One glimpses Tocqueville's distaste for a business career in letters to his friends Beaumont and Kergolay whose financial situations compelled them both to consider it momentarily.

On April 8, 1853 he writes to Beaumont: "Surely, I would not want, even from the point of view of your well-intended interest in your children, to see you devote your life to increasing your fortune, as poor Louis [de Kergolay] seems bent on doing..." Alexis de Tocqueville, Selected Letters on Politics and Society, trans. James Toupin and Roger Boesche, ed. Roger Boesche, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 289.

One hears the same tenor in a letter, September 22, 1853, addressed to Kergolay. "I have never hesitated an instant in believing that given the circumstances of your life, you were doing the right thing in searching for a lucrative career and desiring ardently that you succeed in finding one. Only, you must allow me to regret that the circumstances of your life have been such that this determination on your part was necessary. I have insurmountable prejudices against industrial work, even the greatest. I spent twelve years of my life with political men, a great number of whom occupied themselves at the same time with industry and although there is enough natural affinity and enough of a close proximity between these two careers, I have almost always found that the industrial preoccupations had exercised on the sentiments and on the ideas of those who indulged in them an influence which, in the long run, was not good. All that I can concede, is that at

---

your age and with a sturdy character like yours, this danger is not to be feared. I can't, nevertheless, engage you enough to struggle inwardly against the cooling and specializing tendencies of your new profession. I saw vigorous minds end by giving in to it." OC XIII, 264.

<sup>124</sup> DA, II, 3, 18, 594-595/752.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 18, 589/745.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., II, 3, 18, 597/756.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **HOW TOCQUEVILLE SYNCRETIZES THE TEACHING OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT WITH THE MORALISTIC LANGUAGE OF PASCAL TO FORMULATE A RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE FOR DEMOCRACY**

Tocqueville's religious doctrine is a complex mixture of two distinct traditions that leaves it open to various interpretations inasmuch as it enfoldes the enlightenment's view of the political utility of religion in the moralistic language of Pascal. This odd combination not only reflects Tocqueville's own ambivalence about religion but it also allows him to make religion a pillar of liberty in a way that conforms to the particular intellectual habits and sentiments bred by equality. Following Montesquieu for whom religion draws its strength by "fit[ting] into men's way of thinking and feeling"<sup>1</sup> Tocqueville finds in Rousseau's moral teaching an appropriate intellectual model for establishing a religious doctrine for democracy. Nevertheless, this accommodation does not seem to him to answer completely a general human longing for the spiritual, which the enlightenment's rationalism cannot fulfill. Hence, he finds in Pascal's understanding of the human condition a way to give expression to and satisfy this yearning, which transcends the proclivities that characterize people in particular political regimes. In sum, Tocqueville's religious teaching seeks to accommodate democracy's particular inclinations by reconciling the enlightenment's insistence on reason as the basis of religious beliefs with a modified version of Pascal's spiritualism, which emphasizes man's misery without God, by differentiating between two sorts of beliefs: those of the intellect and those of the sentiments.

This chapter examines the contents of Tocqueville's religious doctrine to show that: 1) it is modeled on Rousseau's natural religion, which in many respects borrows

Christianity precepts of morality while rejecting its dogmas as the nefarious opinions that corrupt man, to satisfy the intellectual habits of democratic man; 2) it appeals to Montesquieu's concept of virtue to accommodate the democratic sentiment to relate everything to self-interest and 3) it suggests that Pascal's "hidden God"<sup>2</sup> alone can appease the restlessness and anxiety to which equality gives rise. Tocqueville, for whom religious opinions are essential for bringing man to virtue in democracy, adjusts Rousseau's teaching by underlining the compatibility of the enlightenment with the substance if not the form of Christianity. His religious doctrine is founded on the premise that there exists an inexorable harmony between the principles of Christianity and those of the enlightenment insofar as the latter fulfilled the promise of Christianity's proclamation of the equality of all men before God. This innovation makes the Rousseau/Montesquieu/Pascal combination a little less incoherent even though there is an immense chasm that separates Rousseau's desire to make reason the foundation of religion and Montesquieu's view that interest imitates virtue when it functions as the basis for common action from Pascal's idea that faith must be the basis of Christian beliefs.

Tocqueville systematizes his religious teaching in the second volume of Democracy in America by dividing it into two separate sections that reflect the distinction he makes between beliefs as the intellectual habits and as the sentiments of men. In the first section, Tocqueville analyzes the way in which the democratic state fosters intellectual habits that incline men to general ideas to show how this affects their beliefs, their aptitude for and taste for the sciences, the arts and literature. This introduction paves the way for him to outline the first part of his religious teaching in a

discussion on poetry by comparing the objects that lend themselves to the representation of the ideal in aristocracy on the one hand and democracy on the other to show the way in which beliefs are inspired in these two states. In the second, he examines the way in which the sentiments of individualism and materialism equality generates can be harnessed to direct man toward virtue, especially in nations where enlightenment and religion are absent.

The influence of Rousseau is predominant in the first section inasmuch as it relies on reason to cultivate beliefs that foster social order whereas in the second that of Montesquieu and Pascal is prevalent insofar as Tocqueville appeals to interest as a motive for virtue and religious beliefs. In the latter, he seeks to guide sentiments along a middle course to keep democratic people from succumbing on the one hand to materialism, which left undirected degrades the human spirit, and on the other to spiritualism, which manifest itself as a reaction to materialism and gives rise to the fanaticism that leads to intolerance. Since Tocqueville's religious teaching aims primarily to correct the opinions that underpin the bourgeois values of French society, this chapter will examine first the views he shares with Rousseau about the questionable practices of the Church and second their fundamental differences before it turns to its principal task of delineating the elements of his religious doctrine.

### **How Tocqueville's Condemnation of the Practices and Policies of the Catholic Church Recalls Rousseau's Reasons for Censuring Religion**

In a letter, May 13, 1852, to Francisque de Corcelle, his friend and former Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Rome during his short tenure as France's

Minister of Foreign Affairs (June 2, 1849-October 31, 1849), Tocqueville expresses his bitterness against the slavish deference exhibited by the French clergy toward the despotism of the Prince-President, Louis Napoléon.<sup>3</sup> The tenor of his correspondence with Corcelle beginning in the fall of 1849 about the practices of the Church can best be characterized as acerbic. In a number of these letters Tocqueville admonishes Corcelle whose veneration for Pope Pius IX and sympathies with and strong ties to France's Catholic party inclined him to challenge Tocqueville's specific instructions to oppose the antiliberal policies of the pope who was willing to adopt any means to maintain the temporal power of the Church in Rome.

Even though the religious sentiments Tocqueville expresses in this correspondence postdate the April 1840 publication of the second volume of Democracy in America in which the most important elements of his religious teaching are found, they are still relevant to this study since they are consistent with that teaching. The correspondence with Corcelle depicts Tocqueville's personal views on the religious events of his time and thus provides a window through which to glimpse the circumstances that might have contributed to embed deeper his ambivalent religious beliefs. Tocqueville who was always fearful that his criticisms might be used as powerful weapons against religion by its enemies found in Corcelle both a trusted friend and a zealous Catholic with whom to spout against the Church's temerarious unwillingness to embrace the unrelenting movement of the century toward liberal democracy.<sup>4</sup>

You say, may be with reason, that I attach too much importance,  
with respect to faith, to the accidental conduct of the clergy. You must

forgive something of the pain, I could almost say the despair that I feel, at the sight of what is happening, convinced as I am that the true greatness of man is to be found only in the harmony of the liberal sentiment and the religious sentiment, working simultaneously to animate and restrain souls, and my sole political passion had been for thirty years to assure this harmony. I am far from saying that among the greatest number of our compatriots the respect for religion is not growing at this time (which is unfortunately not the same thing as the growth of faith) at the sight of the leaders of the Church [acting like] senators, of a government celebrating at the slightest thing the necessity of beliefs and the utility of good manners, and in return priests praising in the pulpit the chosen of the people and the man [Louis-Napoléon] sent from God to save France. I do not doubt that the crowd would not be enlightened in seeing blessed the soldiers who have just violently overthrown the laws of the country, and for their part, follow the processions; I know that the majority will honor less a neglected and poor clergy than a clergy who can lean on the soldier for its need and who is endowed, even if it is with confiscated goods; as for me, I confess to you, all this amalgam of that which I esteem the most and that which I despise the most fill me with disgust and horror.<sup>5</sup>

In another letter Tocqueville rails against the French clergy, which unscrupulously contradicts itself, for example, on the important policy issue of a free system of education to gain favor with the alternate regimes in power at the expense of the public good. He asserts that the impact of this spectacle on delicate minds and lofty

souls is more dangerous than Voltaire's jokes, Rousseau's tirades against the Church and all the effort of the spirit of skepticism of the century.<sup>6</sup> Still in another letter to Corcelle, September 17, 1853, he declares that if the conduct of the clergy in France is not only enough to kill one's faith, it certainly has had a greater effect in awakening his doubt than did his youthful exposure to the complete works of Voltaire and Rousseau.<sup>7</sup> In short, his correspondence with Corcelle, with whom he had bitter disagreements over the terms of France's negotiating position in the Rome Affair,<sup>8</sup> reveals Tocqueville's painful realization that far from embracing the liberal spirit of the century, the Church in Rome was instead entrenching itself in the detestable absolutism of the past while in France it was making itself a willing servant of despotism.

The connection Tocqueville makes among the conduct of the Catholic clergy in France, Rousseau and his doubt shows by his own admission that Rousseau's condemnation of the Church is not without justification. The same conclusion cannot be drawn about his inclusion of Voltaire in his denunciations, which is an exaggeration undoubtedly meant to underscore his belief that the Church by its practices is causing irreparable harm to the credibility of religion. Tocqueville's reference to Rousseau is never disparaging but frequently in his correspondence he uses "voltaireanism" in the pejorative sense it was frequently used in the nineteenth century to express a hateful skepticism. For example, Arthur de Gobineau defends himself against Tocqueville's remonstrance for his harsh criticism of Christian morality by stating he is not a "voltairean."<sup>9</sup> Likewise, in his scathing description of his former colleagues in the Chamber of Deputies, Tocqueville qualifies one of them, a certain M. Viellard, as "a Voltairean in religious belief."<sup>10</sup>



The linkage with Rousseau also supports this study's proposition that Rousseau influences Tocqueville's teaching on religion insofar as he provides the foundation upon which Tocqueville builds the edifice of a rational religion that corresponds to the needs of nineteenth century democratic society. Tocqueville's correspondence with Corcelle provides ample evidence that he shares with Rousseau an affinity to seek some form of alternative to the *status quo* of the religious establishment for the sake of liberty, even if his approach is less unorthodox than that of his mentor. In sum, it shows that Tocqueville holds the moral infractions of the Catholic clergy partly responsible for harming the cause of liberty in nineteenth century France just as Rousseau previously held religion responsible for instituting the system of moral or political inequality that enchains man in society.<sup>11</sup>

Tocqueville's correspondence with Corcelle as shown herein recalls the condemnations, albeit of another kind, that Rousseau heaps upon positive religion, especially Christianity. Rousseau explicitly rejects Christianity and argues cogently for a natural religion based solely on reason because he believes positive religion is based on error and lies and because it often becomes exclusive it leads men to intolerance.<sup>12</sup> In short, he sees in positive religion "only the crimes of men and the miseries of mankind."<sup>13</sup> Likewise, the correspondence with Corcelle demonstrates the extent to which Tocqueville attributes all that he finds problematic with the Catholic Church to the vices of men. Nevertheless, he does not go as far as Rousseau in rejecting Christianity. In fact, he maintains that the Christian doctrines, such as "the virtue attributed to faith, the utility of faith, the necessity of faith, the inadequacy of deeds without faith," that lead to intolerance "are necessarily inseparable from all the good they bring us." He continues

further: “Yet I am convinced that the eventual damage to human morality thereby caused is far less than what would result from moral systems that have emancipated themselves from religion altogether. The longer I live the less I think that the peoples of the world can ever separate themselves from a positive religion...”<sup>14</sup>

And for Tocqueville the best is not only Christianity but it is also the religion most suited to democracy.<sup>15</sup> Thus, it is noteworthy that his observations of the Church’s shortcomings bring him to a different conclusion than Rousseau. His criticisms are confined only to the vices of the temporal government of the Church whose long-term effects he fears will be detrimental to the much needed moral and intellectual government it must retain over catholicity under democracy. He differentiates himself from Rousseau insofar as he rejects only the temporal government of the Church while emphasizing the importance of its spiritual government. The following comment to Corcelle supports this study’s view: “I feel always a certain fear when I see Catholics defend the temporal government of the pope as if this government forms an inherent part of the religious establishment.”<sup>16</sup>

Thus, Tocqueville’s correspondence illuminates the exact point in which he parts with Rousseau. For all his debt to Rousseau, Tocqueville does not endorse his belief that positive religion sets man at odds with himself by placing him under contradictory obligations, that of a churchman and of a citizen.<sup>17</sup> In fact, Tocqueville affirms the social usefulness of positive religion for the maintenance of order with the proviso that it limits its “authority to bring [democratic] men back to spiritualist opinions.” The following anecdote encapsulates his thought on the subject.

The Revolution of 1792, when striking the upper classes, had cured them of their irreligiousness; it had taught them, if not the truth, at least the social usefulness of belief. This lesson was lost upon the middle class, which remained their political heir and their jealous rival; and the latter had even become more skeptical in proportion as the former seemed to become more religious. The Revolution of 1848 had just done on a small scale for our tradesmen what that of 1792 had done for the nobility: the same reverses, the same terrors, the same conversion; it was the same picture, only painted smaller and in less bright and, no doubt, less lasting colours. The clergy had facilitated this conversion by separating itself from all the old political parties, and entering into the old, true spirit of the Catholic clergy, which is that it should belong only to the Church. It readily, therefore, professed republican opinions, while at the same time it gave to long established interests the guarantee of its traditions, its customs and its hierarchy.<sup>18</sup>

Tocqueville's teaching without doubt distinguishes itself from that of Rousseau by clearly advocating a role for Christianity, especially Catholicism, in democracy with the caveat that it must detach itself from political matters to occupy itself solely with cultivating man's natural aspiration for spiritual fulfillment. He is unequivocal on this point in private as well in his more public writings. "I feel myself so sensitive to the almost inevitable dangers that beliefs risk when their interpreters mix in public affairs, and I am so convinced that one must maintain Christianity within the new democracies at all cost, that I would rather chain priests in the sanctuary than allow them to leave it."<sup>19</sup>

Rousseau, the condemned heretic,<sup>20</sup> is able to provide Tocqueville, the self-proclaimed unbeliever, a guide to cultivate democratic morality that accommodates the intellectual inclination of democratic people because he uses Christianity's language to promote civic virtue. However, there are two important differences between the two men: 1) whereas Rousseau advocates the unity of the theological and political system,<sup>21</sup> Tocqueville insists on their separation; and 2) even if Tocqueville shares Rousseau's irritation with Christianity, unlike him he is able to separate Christianity from the historical context that Rousseau maintains discredits it.

When one wishes to be critical of Christianity, it is better to keep always two things in mind.

The first is this: Christianity has come to us through centuries marked by much rudeness, ignorance, social inequality, and political oppression, during which time it was often a weapon in the hands of kings and of priests. It is equitable to judge it in itself and not by the environment across which it was compelled to travel. Almost all the exaggerated tendencies, almost all the abuses for which you often quite properly reproach Christianity must be attributed to these secondary causes and- this I believe I could easily prove- not to the code of morality whose first principle is this simple maxim: love God with all your heart and your neighbor like yourself, that encapsulates its laws and prophecies.

The second thing is that Christianity is not a philosophy but a religion. There are of course certain doctrines that are necessarily part and parcel of certain religions, and which are not the exclusive attributes of

any one of them...[My growing conviction about the necessity of a positive religion to guide nations] makes me less strict than you about the inconveniences that are inherent in every religion, even the best.<sup>22</sup>

One can almost speculate that Tocqueville would have rebuked Rousseau in the same fashion had it been possible for him to do so. Thus, Tocqueville breaks with Rousseau by differentiating between the spiritual sphere of Christianity and its earthly government: “[f]aith does not appear to me at all to be mixed in any measure with the question [of the perpetual government of souls which God promised to the Church and its hope to direct the affairs of government in any country in the world] which is left entirely to the speculations of human reason.”<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the positive example of the Americans whose religious beliefs and practices conform to reason leads Tocqueville to use Rousseau’s teaching as a framework for his religious doctrine.

**How Tocqueville’s Reverence for Christianity and Advocacy for Disestablishment Suggest that he Does not Wish to Establish a Civil Religion for Democracy and that Rousseau’s Natural Religion is a Closer Model for his Religious Doctrine**

Rousseau makes it a civil duty for man to follow the religion of his father and his country, a requirement that does not conflict with his condemnation of opinions<sup>24</sup> insofar as he admits that the limitations of the human condition make it impossible for man to examine and judge with his reason all the opinions of positive religions. “I regard all the particular religions as so many salutary institutions which prescribe in each country a uniform manner of honoring God by public worship...[Otherwise] the essential worship is that of the heart.”<sup>25</sup> With the last proviso he admits his preference for “the religion of the Gospel, [which for him is] the true theism, and might be called the divine natural law.”<sup>26</sup>

These considerations, i.e., religion's capacity to inculcate moral values in the citizen for the sake of public interest and the conformity of Christianity to natural law, lead him to borrow Christianity's language to establish a civil religion with the force of law for a secular objective.

Tocqueville concurs with Rousseau's first premise insofar as he recognizes that democracy, which is coeval with the enlightenment, limits the objects that occupy man's thought to the procurement of his material well-being. Democracy not only displaces the locus of authority that provided man a moral guide under aristocracy but it also makes him more dependent on that authority for his opinions, especially those that relate to general matters like religion, philosophy, politics, etc. However, the mutability of democratic laws gives Tocqueville a compelling justification for situating the authority of religion beyond the reach of human reason with, nevertheless, the stipulation that it remains within the bounds of intellectual perception to ensure its ability to hold a moral influence on democratic society. Therefore, Tocqueville's insistence on a clear division between the temporal and the spiritual establishes an important difference between his religious doctrine and Rousseau's civil religion, which requires the unity of theology and politics, while at the same his demand that religion conforms to reason makes him a disciple of Rousseau's natural religion.

Tocqueville outlines several themes in the first four chapters of the second volume that form the backdrop against which he formulates the portion of his religious doctrine that is modeled on Rousseau's teaching. First, he shows that by promoting self-reliance equality brings the American to apply unbeknownst to him the philosophy of the enlightenment in his practical affairs and to extend this intellectual habit to other things,

including religion. This general tendency to depend on his reason makes Tocqueville's American scorn forms, which he believes conceal the truth from him. Second, he argues that by isolating men from one another and overwhelming them with the sense of their own weakness, equality makes them conform to opinion. Third, he states that by making men similar, equality inclines them to contract the habit and taste for general ideas insofar as their similarities lead them to attribute their thoughts and feelings to their fellows, except in matters related to their personal interest. He warns that the democratic inclination to make everything self-referenced is disruptive and harmful to political life unless it is tempered by free institutions that encourage citizens to participate in public affairs. Lastly, Tocqueville maintains that if the human condition makes general ideas a necessity for men, equality augments this necessity by leaving them little leisure for contemplation.

Tocqueville walks a tightrope in his complex approach to formulate a religious doctrine compatible with the inclinations democracy generates. He takes a position contrary to that of Rousseau for whom the yoke of opinions is particularly to be feared in matters of religion while simultaneously he simplifies and limits Christian dogmas to those that constitute Rousseau's natural religion to accommodate the democratic distaste for forms. Whereas Rousseau maintains that religious opinions lead to intolerance and human miseries, Tocqueville affirms that religious dogmas are among the most important for men to hold in democratic times. For Tocqueville, it is indubitable that positive religion provides the only moral rudder in the chaotic democratic world to navigate a course amidst the dangerous instincts equality inspires. His overarching goal is to bring religion in harmony with the democratic inclinations he carefully outlines in the first four

chapters of volume two to make it palatable to democratic man. Thus, while he disagrees explicitly with Rousseau's condemnation of Christianity for, *inter alia*, its tendency to detach the citizen from his social obligations, he nonetheless models his modified Christian religion on Rousseau's natural religion whose basic tenets are derived from the Gospel.

Rousseau ostensibly exempts the Gospel, which he praises as the "holy, sublime and true religion,"<sup>27</sup> from his quarrel with the Christianity inasmuch as it enfolds the precepts of natural law in its summation of the Christian moral law, which teaches that "[l]ove of man derived from love of self is the principle of human justice."<sup>28</sup> In fact, he condemns Christianity precisely because intolerance and fanaticism have caused it to depart from the fundamental and simple teaching of the Gospel, which is to love one's fellowmen out of love of God. Yet, even as Rousseau structures his natural religion on the pure and simple religion of the Gospel, he maintains that it has serious shortcomings that preclude it from being the religion of the citizen: 1) it has no connection to the body politic and hence cannot give force to the law to bind society; 2) it detaches the heart of the citizen from the state and the things of this world; and 3) it contains a great number of things repugnant to reason. Since for Rousseau the purpose of religion is to promote and invigorate the social spirit, the Christianity of the Gospel cannot fulfill this objective. At best, it can constitute the religion of the individual so long as it remains a private affair that does not interfere with his duty as a citizen, which ought always to be man's first and foremost obligation. But Rousseau himself anticipates the near impossibility of this accommodation insofar as he argues that Christianity, which leaves the good Christian indifferent to the things of this world by preaching submission and servitude, destroys the



social spirit and thus opens the door to tyranny. Therefore, he adjusts the moral language of the Gospel to make it compatible with reason by redirecting it to a civic end

Rousseau outlines his natural religion in the Emile, a philosophical treatise on education in which he launches his attack on revealed religion in 1762, the same year he completed The Social Contract, a practical guide to political liberty which contains the principles of his civil religion. It is noteworthy that he concludes the Emile by delineating the principles of political rights and duties essential to liberty that are the subjects of The Social Contract. The question then is whether the teaching of a civil religion in The Social Contract supersedes that of the natural religion found in the Emile. This may not seem significant since the articles of faith of Rousseau's civil religion are similar to those of his natural religion insofar as both are founded on the Christian concepts of duty and accountability to God in the life to come. Nevertheless, this study takes the position that there is a significant difference between them insofar as the first aims to compel public virtue as a matter of law and makes non-conformity punishable by death. In contrast, man submits to the latter of his own will in response to an education carefully and specifically tailored to awaken his natural sentiments and cultivate his reason to produce the moral virtue that leads to public virtue. Since the Emile incorporates the political elements of The Social Contract, it can be argued that Rousseau in the end despairs of relying on philosophy to promote virtue in bourgeois society and hence resorts to a civil religion as a more practical means to lead "a blind multitude"<sup>29</sup> to virtue. Rousseau himself seems to provide the answer at the end of the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" in the Emile by affirming that it is not possible to do for a

whole nation that which can be achieved on an individual basis. Speaking of the quarrel between philosophy and religion he affirms:

I do not know whether one [a good philosopher] is easier to find than the other [a true Christian] among individuals. But I do know that as soon as it is a question of peoples, it is necessary to suppose one which will abuse philosophy without religion, just as our peoples abuse religion without philosophy...

It still remains to be known whether philosophy, if it were at its ease and on the throne, would have a good command over vainglory, interest, ambition, and the petty passions of man, and whether it would practice that gentle humanity it lauds to us in its writings.

From the point of view of principles, there is nothing that philosophy can do well that religion does not do still better, and religion does many things that philosophy could not do...

It is true that no man follows his religion, when he has one, in every point. It is also true that most men hardly have one and do not follow at all the one they have. Still some men do have one and follow it at least in part; and it is indubitable that religious motives often prevent them from doing harm and produce virtues and laudable actions which would not have occurred without these motives.<sup>30</sup>

Tocqueville's religious doctrine could be said to share the temporal quality of Rousseau's civil religion insofar as it replaces civil law with public opinion, which Tocqueville insists is stronger than the law in democracy to compel moral conformity.

Moreover, his teaching like that of Rousseau seems at first glance to be less concerned with saving man in the next world than it is with circumscribing his actions to a moral authority in this one to provide a counterweight to the dangerous instincts democracy inspires. However, while Tocqueville shares Rousseau's position about making religion more civic-oriented, he does not go as far as him to advocate the eradication of positive religion. Rather, Tocqueville instructs that the best way to achieve this objective is to confine religion within the bounds proper to it. In other words, Tocqueville wants to keep religion separate from human laws by elevating it to a sphere that deals solely with the general relations of men to God, which for him irrevocably has a positive effect on the relations of men among themselves. Thus, in contrast to Rousseau who wants to unite religion and politics, Tocqueville argues for the separation of Church and state precisely because the laws of the one being divine are constant while those of the latter being human are changeable, especially in democracy. He affirms that religion risks compromising its credibility by associating itself with politics, which inescapably suffers the reversal of fortunes that is the inevitable fate of human affairs.

Yet, a plausible case could be made to show that Tocqueville models his religion for democracy not on Rousseau's natural religion but on his civil religion insofar as he does not trust reason to guide men in matters of religion in democracy where they are completely absorbed with practical matters and have little leisure for contemplation. Rousseau's natural religion teaches that reason is the faculty that leads man to know about the existence of God, the immortality of his soul and his duties toward his fellowmen. Moreover, it is the sole means by which man delivers himself from the doubts engendered by competing religious and philosophical opinions. Tocqueville on

the contrary asserts that because it is so indispensable for men to have fixed ideas about religious matters, they cannot rely solely on their reason to comprehend them.

Accordingly, he maintains that religions “furnish a solution to these primordial questions [general ideas about God and human nature] that is clear, precise, intelligible to the crowd and very lasting.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, Tocqueville here seems less willing to embrace Rousseau’s natural teaching to cultivate reason as a means to discover God’s goodness and His justice than he is ready to adopt his notion of a civil religion for the crowd as a means to foster “sentiments of sociability... [that lead citizens] to love law and justice.”<sup>32</sup> Echoing Rousseau’s sentiments about the political utility of religion he states that “one must recognize that if it [religion] does not save men in the other world, it is at least very useful to their happiness and greatness in this one.”<sup>33</sup> Lastly, Tocqueville’s willingness to subordinate individual reason to the authority of religion as common opinion to eliminate the potential for doubt in democracy-- where intellectual independence combined with little leisure for contemplation and a multiplicity of sects becomes a breeding ground for it-- could be interpreted as a compromise toward the wholesale solution adopted by Rousseau in his civil religion rather than an endorsement of his natural religion.

The best way to explain the balance Tocqueville seeks to achieve by embracing one or the other of Rousseau’s religious models is to consider the assumptions that underpin their respective teachings. In Rousseau’s republican theory only a nation of Gods could govern itself democratically<sup>34</sup> and a society of true Christians would not be a society of men.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, Tocqueville’s *American* convinces the reader that not only a nation of men governs itself democratically but also it is able to do so because it is

founded on Christian principles. Nevertheless, Tocqueville seeks a solution for France where democracy did not originate under the same favorable conditions. The habits of religion and liberty that keep democracy in check in America are not existent in France. Thus, Tocqueville begins his enterprise with a wholly different perspective from that of Rousseau for whom there is only one means to neutralize the influence of private interests propelling democracies to internecine strife: guide opinions with a civil religion to foster justice and prevent the fanaticism and intolerance inherent in religion.

Tocqueville has the advantage over Rousseau of having observed that self-interest in America does not extinguish public virtue because the presence of free institutions encourages participation in public affairs. The American experience shows that free institutions can fulfill the objective of Rousseau's civil religion, which is to inspire public virtue. Consequently, while Tocqueville agrees with Rousseau about the utility of religion to order human affairs, he stops short of endorsing his replacement of Christianity with a civil religion. Rather, he insists that in democracy positive religion is needed to serve the interest of the state by regulating private morality. He repudiates emphatically the notion of a civil religion in the second section of volume two. "I do not believe in the prosperity any more than the longevity of official philosophies, and as for state religions, I have always thought that if sometimes they could temporarily serve the interests of political power, they would always sooner or later become fatal to the Church."<sup>36</sup> Thus, in the final analysis it may be said that his religious doctrine aims like Rousseau's civil religion to inculcate public virtue in the citizen only for a secular end. However, because it seeks to achieve this objective by bringing Christianity into harmony with reason to fit the intellectual disposition of democratic people, it must be conceded

that its principles parallel those of Rousseau's natural religion, which can be more easily adjusted toward the attainment of individual spirituality.

It is not difficult to see how Tocqueville's religious doctrine could be interpreted on the one hand as an endorsement of Rousseau's civil religion and on the other as that of his natural religion given that both share the same fundamental dogmas, which are also the principal dogmas of the Christianity of the Gospel, i.e., the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. Nevertheless, this study maintains that Rousseau's natural religion has greater appeal to Tocqueville as a model because: 1) it emphasizes the compatibility of reason and religion and in doing so it provides him a greater latitude to incorporate the teachings of Montesquieu and Pascal; and 2) it does not conflict with Tocqueville's advocacy for disestablishment since unlike the civil religion it is silent on the unity of the temporal with the spiritual. Thus, as a paradigm it conforms to Tocqueville's objective to accommodate religion with the intellectual disposition of the democratic mind while enabling him to promote positive religion, more specifically Christianity, as a much needed solace for the atomistic self equality creates. Just as Rousseau's natural religion instructs that dogmas ought to conform to reason by remaining "clear, luminous and striking by their obviousness,"<sup>37</sup> Tocqueville adduces the example of the Americans to teach that in democracy Christianity ought to limit its "forms, practices and [representational] figures... and present ideas clearly, simply and generally"<sup>38</sup> to conform to the general idea inspired by equality, viz., that all men are brothers subject to one single God who imposes the same rules on all.

Tocqueville's American resembles Rousseau's citizen in his perfunctory approach to religious worship and if he is not bound by legal order to a civil religion he is

nonetheless bound by common opinion to a positive religion. But since common opinion is equivalent to universal reason in democracy, a harmony reigns between religion and reason, the premise of Rousseau's natural religion.

Tocqueville justifies the specific criteria he outlines for religion in democracy by demonstrating that Christian religious beliefs have been influenced historically by the social and political state. For example, the hierarchy of aristocratic societies lent itself to a multiplicity of agents and protectors before the sovereign master who were worshipped as saints and angels whereas democratic equality disposes the human mind to the unity of one Creator to whom alone homage is due. Tocqueville anticipates criticism with his position on accommodation by underlining the two distinct components of religion: the forms and substance of beliefs. The first is the external practice related to worship and accessory notions linked to beliefs while the second relates to the principal dogmas that constitute a belief. His willingness to adjust Christianity to democratic instincts is limited only to the first of these and his reason for doing so will become more evident in the section below.

### **How Tocqueville Draws a Connection between Poetry and Beliefs to Promote a Religious Doctrine Conformable to the Ideas and Sentiments Equality Fosters**

Tocqueville develops his argument progressively in part one of volume two of Democracy in America to demonstrate that only a religion founded on reason will accord with the democratic instinct. He begins by examining the American's practical application of Cartesianism, which demonstrates that equality *ipso facto* leads citizens to

rely on the effort of their reason, before showing that public opinion as universal reason is the appropriate generator and reservoir of beliefs in matters of politics and religion.

Following this introduction he proceeds step-by-step to illustrate the debasement of the sciences, the arts and literature in democratic societies through his usual method of comparison with aristocracy. Whereas in aristocratic societies intellectual activities were conceived and undertaken by a few whose ambition and discriminate taste brought them to uncover truth, pursue greatness and represent beauty, in democratic societies they are carried out only for their utility and consumption by the vulgar and mediocre crowd. This contrast enables him to show that the general lowering of standards in the intellectual habits of democratic people is accompanied by an impoverishment of spirit that entrenches them in the material world with deleterious effect for morality.

With this broad overview on the intellectual movement of democratic states, Tocqueville prepares his reader for the first phase of his teaching on religion, which he elaborates not unsurprisingly in a discussion of poetry that combines the teaching of the enlightenment with Pascal's view of the human condition. In using poetry as a medium to discuss beliefs, Tocqueville remains faithful to the classical and modern philosophical tradition of Plato and Rousseau respectively insofar as he concedes that there is an irrevocable connection between poetry and beliefs. Plato replaces poetry with the noble lie as the foundation of beliefs whereas Rousseau banishes poetry completely until imagination has been purified to conceive the divine and become motivated by love of the beautiful. In contrast, Tocqueville whose project is far more modest than that of either of his predecessors-- who seek respectively to create an ideal city ruled by philosophers and establish a modern moral philosophy for purely civic ends-- shows that



the intellectual inclination of man in democracy makes poetry an appropriate vehicle to inspire beliefs favorable to morality. He argues that because the democratic social state leaves the poet few subjects for idealization other than man's preoccupation with himself, it provides him an excellent opportunity to depict the one aspect of man that constitutes his greatness, which for Tocqueville is irrevocably linked to the liberty he associates with moral choice.

Tocqueville thus differentiates himself from the classical and modern traditions, which maintain that poetry has generally propagated beliefs inimical to reason, to show on the contrary that democratic poetry, as will be shown below, can inspire beliefs that elevate man's imagination to conceive the divine order by depicting the moral consequences of his actions. Tocqueville draws a comparison between the objects that lend themselves to poetic representation in aristocracy and democracy to support this innovation.

Aristocratic poetry not only disposes the mind to beliefs but it also inclines it to adopt one faith over another inasmuch as the immobility of society favors the firmness and duration of positive religions and social stratification supports intermediary powers between God and man to give poets an inexhaustible source of subjects to idealize. Moreover, the order that reigns in the aristocratic state not only nurtures a strong taste for ideal beauty but it also produces a peaceful effect on man's soul. Hence, it lifts man's spirit above and beyond his material care.

The opposite is true in the fluid environment of democracy where faltering beliefs, which are as changing as laws invite doubt while equality, which makes everyone alike leaves the poet little with which to capture the imagination. Furthermore, the

democratic state, which cultivates a taste for the useful and the real, is constantly agitated by the “love of material enjoyments, the idea of the better, the competition, and the imminent charm of success,”<sup>39</sup> leaving the soul continuously restless and the spirit bounded in the mundane. But man remains in his immaterial nature, an object pregnant with limitless contrasts that provides the poet a rich source for ideal representation.

Tocqueville carries with these comparisons to underscore that poetry not only reflects the fundamental traditions of the social state from which it draws its sources, but it can also inspire beliefs by idealizing the real and the visible. Democracy, which has simplified religion in the case of the Americans and eliminated it in France, has yet to produce any poetry making it difficult to ascertain the general direction poets will take in this new social state to influence beliefs. The Americans who generally furnish him his democratic prototypes have not yet produced any poets and Tocqueville finds nothing more antipoetic than the life of man in the United States. Moreover, he maintains that the descriptive poetry of nineteenth century Europe whose focus on inanimate nature is thought to define democratic poetry represents a mere passing phase in the transitional period in which equality is making progress in former aristocratic societies. Therefore, he is left to speculate on the course of democratic poetry. He posits that democracy’s obsession with physical gratification and vision of anticipated success, kindled by a belief in progress and the indefinite perfectibility of the human race, will direct the poet’s imagination toward the future just as aristocracy’s reverence for ancient traditions and beliefs turned it toward contemplation of the past. Nevertheless, he is cognizant that the tendency of democratic poetry to contemplate the future rather than the past can lead to

two alternatives: it can inspire religious beliefs on the one hand or discourage them on the other by corrupting the mind with incoherent and fantastic imaginings.

Tocqueville focuses his discussion of democratic poetry on the first of these options, which coincides with his objective for democracy. Focusing on the experience of the American he shows that if his life is filled with the unpoetic and petty concerns of his efforts toward progress, it is nonetheless animated by the poetic idea of the assimilation of mankind into one vast democracy from the sight of the constant movement and integration of men from different communities and countries. Despite his reservations about democracy's tendency to impoverish the human spirit, Tocqueville thus attributes a poetic quality to the idea of democracy that contrasts with the leitmotif of his commentary, viz., equality negates individuality by inducing identification with the mass to offset the individual's sense of weakness and isolation. Indeed, it is his hope that poetry can temper the characteristic herd mentality of democracy by idealizing the individual's moral capacity to control his destiny.

Tocqueville wants to use poetry as a vehicle to foster beliefs because he is particularly concerned about the amoral and fatalistic consequences of the democratic tendency to substitute the dominance of the crowd for the will of the individual. He addresses this matter in a later chapter titled "Tendencies Particular to Historians in Democratic Times." He argues therein that the proclivity of democratic historians to deny any weight to the actions of individuals on the events of the world and to attribute them instead disproportionately to general causes that seem to obey a blind force is dangerous to society insofar as it promotes a doctrine of fatality that devalues free-will and with it individual capacity for moral choice.<sup>40</sup> Since democratic poetry is still

indeterminate Tocqueville wants to show that it can make use of the very circumstances that propel it to focus on man and his future to teach that religion provides a fixed point in morality to deal with the inevitable conflicts that assail human destiny, particularly in the chaotic environment bred by equality.

Tocqueville's vision for democratic poetry shows a determination to guide opinions toward beliefs and he resorts to the moving language of Pascal who-- contrary to Rousseau-- believes that the corruption of human nature predates society and thus provides a different corrective for it. The inclusion of Pascal allows Tocqueville to go beyond Rousseau's secular objective to emphasize religion's unrivaled capacity to alleviate the destabilizing effect of equality on the human spirit. More will be said in the section below about Pascal's influence on Tocqueville's religious teaching. Suffice it for now to say that for Tocqueville the conception of a providential hand guiding the world to democracy, which for him is synonymous with justice,<sup>41</sup> provides democratic poets a theme that lends itself to the depiction of ideal beauty: the vast limit of human liberty within the fatal circle Providence draws around each man. "Human destinies, man, taken apart from his time and his country and placed before nature and God with his passions, his doubts, his unheard-of prosperity, and his incomprehensible miseries, will become the principal and almost unique object of poetry for these [democratic] people."<sup>42</sup>

It is partially in his description of the direction he outlines for democratic poetry that Tocqueville's teaching on religion assumes a tenor reminiscent of Pascal's view of the human condition insofar as he invokes the inescapable angst that inevitably besets man *qua* man as he contemplates the wretchedness of his existence. It is not difficult to see why Tocqueville would choose to borrow Pascal's perspective to show that the

impoverishment of spirit democracy generates is certain to magnify this anguish. This issue, addressed by Rousseau in the context of political life, is given an otherworldly dimension by Pascal.

In contrast to Rousseau who maintains that reason guides man to virtue to overcome his weakness, which comes from the inequality between his strength and desires, Pascal avers that man can prevail over his weakness only through faith because he is composed of two opposed and diverse natures: the body and the soul, which is incomprehensible to reason. Pascal believes that man's awareness of his dual nature fills him with a terror that pushes him to seek countless diversions in order to keep from thinking about it. As he sees it, man can avert his existential anxiety only by including God in his life.

For after all, what is man in nature? A nothing *vis a vis* infinity, everything with regard to nothingness, a middle between nothing and everything. Infinitely distanced from understanding the extremes, the end of things and their principle are for him invincibly hidden in an impenetrable secret, equally incapable of seeing the emptiness from where he is pulled, and the infinity where he is engulfed... These extremes [nothingness and infinity] touch and unite themselves in God and only in God... [Otherwise man is] sailing on a vast middle, always uncertain and floating, pushed from one end toward the other... Let [him] then not look for security and stability. [His] reason is always deceived by the inconstancy of appearances; nothing can fix the finite between the infinities that enclose and escape it.<sup>43</sup>

Listen now to Tocqueville as he describes the paradox of democracy wherein the individual draws his strength from an indifferent crowd whose formidable power in turn makes him feel his smallness and weakness. Tocqueville maintains that the awareness of his own insignificance inevitably prompts man to search for a loftier destiny where he can escape his existential loneliness and ennui. He echoes Pascal when he describes the way in which the longings of the human heart for self-understanding can become the appropriate subject of democratic poetry.

I have no need to travel through heaven and earth to discover a marvelous object full of contrasts, of infinite greatness and pettiness, of profound obscurities and singular clarity, capable of giving birth at once to pity, admiration, scorn and terror. I have only to consider myself: man comes from nothing, traverse time, and is going to disappear forever into the bosom of God. One sees him for only a moment wondering, lost, between the limits of the two abysses...[Man] is covered enough to perceive something of himself and veiled enough so that the rest is sunk in impenetrable darkness, into which he plunges constantly and always in vain, in order to succeed in grasping himself.<sup>44</sup>

Tocqueville adduces the works of three poets, who he believes have succeeded in making poetry a vehicle for moral teaching in democracy insofar as they emphasize moral choice as a path to human dignity and liberty in a way that combines the teachings of Rousseau and Pascal. Tocqueville's stated admiration for the poems of Alphonse de Lamartine<sup>45</sup> (Jocelyn, 1836), and Lord Byron (Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, 1812-1818) and a novel by François Auguste-René de Chateaubriand (René, 1802) leaves little doubt

about the combined influence of Rousseau and Pascal on the first portion of his teaching on religion. These works-- excepting Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, an epic poem dedicated to courage, freedom, the transience of human achievements and the enduring beauty of nature-- instruct that religion helps man to bear the inevitable miseries borne of the conflict between his two natures to overcome his passions. The notion that man's nature is divided into two warring parties is a common theme that permeates the teachings of Rousseau and Pascal, albeit with some significant differences in the way in which they are defined. Because so much of Tocqueville's teaching on religion is condensed in his discussion of poetry, it is worthwhile to make a brief survey of the poems he finds suitable for democracy to bring that teaching into greater focus.

For the sake of simplicity, this examination will be limited to René and Jocelyn, each of which share certain similarities with Rousseau's Julie ou La Nouvelle Eloise insofar as all three combine love and religion to teach morality, but unlike Julie the first two emphasize the weakness of man without God central to Pascal's teaching. Although Julie is presented in the form of letters between two lovers, it shares with René the characteristics of a novel inasmuch as it has a plot. Thus, it is noteworthy that Tocqueville who treats René as a poem omits Julie from his list of "democratic poems" despite its thematic connection to René and Jocelyn. The exclusion of Julie then as well as the conspicuous absence of Rousseau's name from his commentary, in which he cites his two other prominent intellectual mentors, raise the possibility that Tocqueville wants to distance himself at least politically from Rousseau's dubious reputation in the nineteenth century as the father of Jacobinism, the revolutionary atheism that gave the French Revolution its impetus. He clearly did not want to be publicly associated with

Rousseau or his political followers as evidenced by his firm decision to decline an invitation to participate in the unveiling of a monument erected to commemorate Voltaire and Rousseau in the Pantheon.<sup>46</sup> Notwithstanding these considerations, the predominance of reason over religion in Rousseau's Julie seems a likely justification for its absence from Tocqueville's list. In contrast, the works of Chateaubriand and Lamartine attempt to balance reason and religion in a way that is redolent of Tocqueville's own religious perspective as will be shown in the comparison of these three works below.

Rousseau's Julie is different from Tocqueville's selected poems for democracy because it gives virtue primacy over piety, which for Rousseau is generally more the product of pride than faith. "But what has revolted me against the professional devotees, is this austerity of mores which makes them insensitive to humanity, it is this excessive pride that makes them look with pity on others."<sup>47</sup> Julie's piety is reasonable insofar as it provides her an outlet in which to nurture the lingering passion of a youthful indiscretion by bearing her soul to God but only after attending to her duties as wife and mother. "To serve God, I know well it is not to pass one's life on one's knees in a chapel; it is to fulfill on earth the duties he imposes on us; it is to do in view of pleasing him all that is suitable to the state in which he has put us: the heart is enough for him, and he who does his duty praises him. One must first do what one must do, and then pray when one can; that is the rule I try to follow."<sup>48</sup> In contrast, Jocelyn is a heroic poem about the human soul's ability to transcend its passions by conforming to the rigors of religion without which it succumbs to depravity while René shows unequivocally the power of religion to heal the wounds of this world. Tocqueville's choice then is hardly surprising since like Lamartine



and especially Chateaubriand he wants to restore religious beliefs by emphasizing the beauty and greatness of Christianity.

In Julie Rousseau demonstrates that faith enlightened by reason embellishes the virtue of woman and gives her comfort and fortitude to accept a less than perfect happiness in this world. “I have lived and I die in the Protestant faith, which draws its unique rule from the Holy Scriptures and reason; my heart has always confirmed what my mouth was pronouncing... that which was impossible for me to believe, I could not say that I believed it; I have always sought sincerely that which was consistent with the glory of God and the truth.”<sup>49</sup> Julie’s devoutness is measured and circumscribed by reason, which not only keeps it from being tainted by intolerance but also subordinates it to her duty. It is not by inadvertence that Rousseau makes Julie’s piety a pillar of her virtue since an important aspect of woman’s virtue for him is to honor prevailing moral opinions, which inevitably are dictated by the religion of the community in which she is born. Rousseau’s Julie resembles in many respects Tocqueville’s American woman in her methodical approach to religion.

Another noteworthy difference between Julie and Tocqueville’s selected poems for democracy is that it teaches that man unlike woman can dispense with religion to achieve moral virtue even though Rousseau concedes such a man is unfortunate not to have the consolation of religion. Julie’s husband, Wolmar, is an agnostic who carved for himself a virtuous life guided solely by his reason. While Julie is convinced that his virtue will earn him divine justice in the next world, she laments his unbelief for robbing him of true happiness in this one. “I would like to see him believe at the price of my blood... For of how much sweetness is he not deprived! What sentiment can console him

in his miseries? Who witnesses the good acts he commits in secrecy? What voice can speak to the depth of his soul? What reward can he expect from his virtue? How can he face death? No, I hope he will not await it in this horrible state.”<sup>50</sup> By cultivating a just and honest heart even though he does not believe in God or the immortality of the soul, Wolmar fulfills nonetheless the goal of Rousseau’s civil religion, the love of law and justice that enables citizens to preserve the sanctity of the social contract.

Tocqueville’s “democratic poems,” Jocelyn and René, are less focused on the disparate moral requirements of the sexes so prevalent in Rousseau’s Julie. Their protagonists, a man and a woman respectively, are guided solely by faith, which rewards self-immolation with the hope of Christian redemption and everlasting happiness taught by Pascal. Thus, his selectivity about the poems he recommends for democracy reveals in its omission of Julie the limits of his endorsement of Rousseau’s rational religion.

Although Lamartine and Chateaubriand are clearly indebted to Rousseau in these particular works-- Chateaubriand had a love/hate relationship with Rousseau<sup>51</sup> and Lamartine had a diversity of attitudes toward him-- they also make clear that they share with Pascal the Catholic belief that the potential for human greatness is irrevocably linked to love of God. Lamartine and Chateaubriand emphasize in these poems that human happiness is fleeting but that God is constant amid the human cycle of suffering, work, death, etc. For them it is the moral force man draws from dedicating his life to a loving God that liberates him from the harmful passions enabling him to fulfill his duty. It is then the notion that love of God is central to the outcome of a difficult choice between duty and passion that sets the poems of Lamartine and Chateaubriand apart from Rousseau’s Julie. Tocqueville endorses the works of the first two and remains silent

about that of the latter precisely because he wants to teach like Pascal that worldly happiness is not only ephemeral but it is also accompanied by agitation and ennui. These symptoms of the existential malaise that is the scourge of human life without exception can be cured only with the hope and consolation that Christianity offers.

René personifies Pascal's view of man without faith insofar as he is overwhelmed by the emptiness, agitation and ennui that assail one in that condition. In fact in his "*Défense du Génie du Christianisme*," which included René until the second edition Ballanche of 1809, Chateaubriand affirms that the objective of his work like that of Pascal's apology for Christianity is to defend it against its attackers and bring France back to the Church to restore the social equilibrium it lost with the Revolution. Moreover, René, which is Chateaubriand's response to Rousseau's Reveries of the Solitary Walker,<sup>52</sup> makes evident that religion heals the heart from its fatal passions whereas solitude outrages it. He chooses to depict religion in its human relations through the medium of a novel to make it agreeable to his compatriots, a project that coincides with Tocqueville's objective to make religion appealing to the democratic mass.

In René, Chateaubriand contrasts the way in which two siblings, René and Amélie, confront their incestuous longings for each other, which originated in René's reveries. His melancholy is an incurable malady whose source he attributes to his lifelong terrifying awareness of a "creation at the same time immense and impenetrable and an abyss open at my sides."<sup>53</sup> In contrast, his sister and victim, Amélie, draws her strength from the knowledge that man's life on earth is short and filled with uncertainty and thus it behooves him to bear it with fortitude to obtain eternal happiness. Whereas Amélie overcomes her passion by consecrating her life to God and fulfilling her duty to

her religious community with charitable works, René makes a different choice preferring instead to abandon himself to solitude and despair by aimless wonderings.

Chateaubriand's novel implies that René is the author of his own misfortune by abandoning himself to his disastrous reveries and instructs that solitude is harmful to him who lives without God. Even when he joins a community of savages in America and takes a native wife in keeping with their traditions, he neglects her to indulge himself in solitary reveries. In contrast, Amélie is healed by devoting herself to convent life and dies happily. René ends miserably, a punishment befitting one unable to prevail over his passions because he shuns obstinately both the consolation of religion and his civil duty.

Chateaubriand ends his novel with the harsh reprimand René receives from the priest after confiding his story to him leaving no doubt about the moral religious lesson he wants to teach. The priest not only reproves him for abandoning his duties to deliver himself to useless reveries but also for his presumptuousness in believing that man can suffice to himself and live in solitude without God. Thus, Chateaubriand combines the importance of duty as the ultimate goal of virtue integral to Rousseau's teaching with Pascal's insistence on faith as the foundation of human happiness.

Likewise, Lamartine depicts in Jocelyn the consequences of the different choices made by Jocelyn and Laurence to cope with their ill-fated love. Confronted with the hard choice between passion and duty, Jocelyn finds the strength to overcome the former to follow his vocation of priesthood. His decision is all the more commendable because it is partially influenced by the call to fulfill a pressing need at a time when the irreligion that accompanied the Revolution had emptied the Church of its ministers and left the world without God. He offers his great sacrifice to God asking Christ to fill him with charity to

love mankind with the same abandon with which he loved Laurence. In contrast, Laurence whose belief is superficial inasmuch as it is an extension of her love for Jocelyn, who was the first to teach her to love God, is ready to detest her Creator if He should take Jocelyn from her. Laurence unlike Jocelyn-- who learns overtime to escape the weight of his loneliness alternatively with prayers, which fill the desert of his life, and science and studies to overcome his doubt and solitude-- abandons herself to a frenzied licentiousness born of despair that brings her little solace.

Lamartine's epic poem assembles numerous themes that make it appealing to Tocqueville as a means to teach religious morality in democracy in a way that coincides with his adaptation of Rousseau's teaching on opinion. For example, it emphasizes the importance of education on morality by contrasting the results of its oversight by a nurturing mother to the absence of one. Jocelyn's ability to cope with disappointment is clearly traceable to his attachment to a loving and pious mother who shaped his reason with holy lessons whereas Laurence who lost her mother as an infant and received her care from a devoted father, who nonetheless neglected to give her religious instruction, is given easily to despair. As a result, Jocelyn finds solace in faith and the fulfillment of his religious duty and Laurence is bereft of this consolation because she lacks the fortitude religion provides to weather suffering. Lamartine thus echoes Rousseau who assigns to woman the important role of inculcating morality in society insofar as he implies that religion taught by a loving mother is the appropriate foundation of a moral education.

Unlike Chateaubriand who takes the Rousseau of the Reveries to task for romanticizing solitude by showing its deleterious effect on the soul, Lamartine's poem follows the principles of natural religion found in his Emile. For example, Jocelyn

teaches the peasant children to hear the voice of their conscience and to use their reason to know God by His works. Additionally, Lamartine makes Jocelyn's solitary retreat on the mountain a time of wondrous contemplation of God's works in nature. Jocelyn who has faith experiences solitude differently than the agnostic René insofar as his reflection on the pristine beauty of nature that surrounds him lifts his heart toward God and brings him to transfigure himself in Him to sense his immortality. Nevertheless, Lamartine like Rousseau in the Emile wants to teach also that the weight of solitude is burdensome to man who needs human contact to nourish his spirit. When Jocelyn makes a return on himself following his meditations he wishes wholeheartedly for the sweetness of companionship if for no other reason than to lift time's oppressive weight off his soul. One almost hears Rousseau speaking through Jocelyn when the latter gives thanks to God for granting him his wish when he stumbles unexpectedly upon Laurence who is confided to him by her dying father. "Every hour, every place, every season, every sky is good when there are two."<sup>54</sup>

Lamartine's poem like Tocqueville's teaching shows a certain ambivalence toward religion, which can be explained by the circumstances of his life at the time he conceived it. He began to write Jocelyn in 1831 exactly twenty-one years after an illness caused a conversion, which he repudiated in 1832 when he abandoned Catholicism definitively. One sees the strong influence of Rousseau in his depiction of the hypocrisy of the clerics who shun Jocelyn, whose chastity they question upon his return to the monastery following his conversion in the prison cell of his benefactor and his ensuing decision to forego the happiness of sharing his life with Laurence to return to the priesthood. Their absence of charity leaves him feeling among men a greater solitude

than that which he experienced when he was alone on the mountain. Likewise, the reader sees the extent to which his view of religion is influenced by Rousseau when he relates superfluously an incident of intolerance toward Jews in which Jocelyn intervenes to teach the perpetrators charity. Nevertheless, he shows the residual influence of Catholicism on his thought when he has Jocelyn invoke Pascal's hidden God as the consoler of his despair. "I give my soul to God, and tell myself: In him, I have the water of my thirst, the end of my ennui, I have the friend whose heart of all love abounds."<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, Jocelyn refers to the crucifix, which is the sole ornament to warm the walls of his poor, village priest cottage, as the celestial friend who fills the desert of his life with his presence. Finally, it is Pascal's notion of God's justice that helps Jocelyn to make sense of the Revolution's senseless killing of innocent victims. "How can the spirit of love, of justice, of peace [which is the spirit of God] serve iniquity, hatred, and falsity? Ah! It is because in his work he acts with men; Virtue conceives them, crime consumes them; The worker is divine, the instrument is mortal."<sup>56</sup>

Yet, despite his carefully crafted argument to show how poetry could elevate the mediocre democratic intellect, Tocqueville gives his last word on democratic poetry not in the chapter bearing this title but in a subsequent one titled "Why American Writers and Orators Are Often Bombastic." One way to explain his about-face, which circuitously brings him back to the propositions of Plato and Rousseau on poetry, is to recall that his commentary on democracy has two specific objectives. On the one hand, he wants to win over democracy's opponents in France by depicting its virtues in America and the chapter specifically dedicated to poetry accomplishes that goal by allowing him to suggest that American democratic poetry may not yet exist but the American people are

invigorated by the poetic idea of man's freedom to shape his destiny under the guiding hand of a divine providence. His selected poems for democracy, which are the works of European aristocrats, demonstrates how closely America's poetic idea corresponds to the aristocratic notion of liberty inasmuch as it derives its strength from firm religious beliefs that favor stable political institutions. Alternatively, he wishes to caution democracy's proponents that the democratic taste for material well-being is a constant threat to liberty, and he prefers to sound this warning in a separate chapter whose title omits the mention of poetry allowing him to preserve the integrity of his original argument, which maintains that the correlation between beliefs and poetry that existed in aristocracy can be reproduced in democracy in a simpler form.

The initial optimism that brings Tocqueville to challenge the classical and modern notion that poetry has a nefarious effect on beliefs gives way to the more sober realization that when beliefs are simplified as they are in democracy poetry can certainly depart from the path of the reasonable and the real. His apprehension stems from the nagging awareness that in democracy the existence of the individual is so filled with the petty cares that agitates and charms it that when and if he consents to tear himself from these it is only to contemplate something bigger than himself and that does not necessarily translate into a disposition to meditate on the sovereign master. In fact, Tocqueville posits that lacking an exhaustible source of subjects to depict, the poet will seize upon this democratic tendency to captivate the imagination with fantastic beings that distort reality and in the end corrupt both himself and his public. Thus, in the final analysis Tocqueville concedes that poetry may indeed not be the channel through which morality is inculcated in democratic citizens inasmuch as it contributes to reinforce their



material taste and leads them away from the moral anchor of religion, the sole guarantee of their freedom. This concession opens the way for him to outline in the second section of volume two how his new political science can reanimate beliefs.

**How Pascal's Understanding of the Human Condition Enables Tocqueville to Establish a Religious Doctrine for Democracy that Integrates the Principles of the Enlightenment with the Basic Tenets of Christian Morality**

Tocqueville borrows Pascal's perspective of human nature to resolve the problems he encounters with Rousseau's teaching on religion. On the one hand, Rousseau's civil religion, which would allow him to meet the necessity of diffusing religion among the democratic masses, is incompatible with his advocacy for disestablishment. On the other hand, Rousseau's natural religion presents him with some difficulties because he does not believe reason can be a reliable guide for religion in democracy. Pascal provides him a way out of his dilemma without prejudice to Rousseau, who as previously shown displays a phantom of Christianity-- at least that of the Gospel-- in his works. Pascal's view that belief in Christianity is not only in man's greatest interest but also is his only path to true happiness enables Tocqueville to use the simplicity of Rousseau's natural religion as a foundation to promote Christian moral principles that conform to the inclinations of his democrat's intellect and sentiments.

Although Pascal and Rousseau begin their analyses of human nature with opposite assumptions that lead them to very different conclusions, they nonetheless agree about one thing: the danger of *amour-propre* to human happiness if it is not directed either by faith or reason respectively. Their concurrence on the importance of guiding *amour-propre*, albeit to very different ends, which for Rousseau is human compassion

and for Pascal charity or love of God, allows Tocqueville to use the one's appeal to reason and the other's appeal to the heart to mitigate the democratic inclination for self-absorption that he believes is so detrimental to liberty. If, on one hand, Rousseau helps Tocqueville to uncover the detrimental impact of opinions on *amour-propre*, Pascal, on the other, allows him to show the importance of imbuing opinions with Christian beliefs to conquer it, inasmuch as it is evident to him that in democracy reason is an unreliable guide for man in religious beliefs.

Pascal teaches that all men seek happiness but none can find it without faith, which fills the infinite abyss between man and God, the source of all happiness. Therefore, he maintains it would seem reasonable to expect that spiritual devotion would be the principal human interest and that religion, which leads man to faith, would be the center to which all human actions tend. But, he finds the opposite to be true and that as a general rule, man allows himself to be pulled in the contrary direction because he harbors deep in his heart two mutually exclusive loves, neither of which can ever blossom fully except at the expense of the other: the first is love of self or *amour-propre* and the other is love of God.<sup>57</sup> *Amour-propre* negates love of God because its fundamental nature is concupiscence, an all-encompassing desire for worldly things and pride, which for Pascal is responsible for turning man away from God. "Everything that is in the world is concupiscence of the flesh, or concupiscence of the eyes, or pride of life: *libido sentiendi, libido sciendi, libido dominandi*... The three concupiscences have made three sects and the philosophers have done nothing other than follow one of the three concupiscences."<sup>58</sup>

*Amour-propre* is the result of the corruption provoked by the original sin blinding man to justice and truth by bringing him to love only himself and to make himself God

even though this human *I* is contemptible by its vices and miseries. This aversion to justice and truth exists in all men, albeit in different degrees and as long as man is left to his own devices he never acts except for the love of self, which is unjust and against all order due to the fallen condition to which he has been reduced by sin. Pascal aims to show that if man is to achieve happiness he must seek to repudiate *amour-propre* and nurture love of God, which inclines him to goodness and justice.

At the heart of Pascal's teaching is the notion that the true and only virtue is to hate oneself so that one can find a truly loveable being to love. Since man is unable to love anything outside himself, he must love a being within himself. That being is the universal Being revealed by Christianity, the kingdom of God who lives in man though it is not a part of man.<sup>59</sup> Christianity is the one and only true religion capable of leading man to virtue because it alone understands the contradiction in man's nature and provides the remedy for the miseries inseparable from it. This conviction is the pillar upon which Pascal's moral doctrine is founded.

The topic of human corruption pervades Pascal's writings. It is addressed in *Les Provinciales*<sup>60</sup> as an attack directed at the Jesuits' casuistry,<sup>61</sup> in the *Ecrits Sur La Grace*,<sup>62</sup> which completes *Les Provinciales* by exposing his theological views on the subject of grace at the heart of the ecclesiastical controversy that pitted Calvinists, Molinists and Jansenists against each other in mid-seventeenth century France, and in the *Pensées* to the spirit of libertine philosophy in vogue in the 1650's.<sup>63</sup> In the latter, Pascal aims to demonstrate, *inter alia*, the superiority of religion over philosophy for leading man to morality because religion addresses the subject of greatest interest to him, the immortality of his soul. Since Tocqueville's religious doctrine relies on the moral

teaching of the *Pensées*, which are Pascal's notes for the great work he was planning on the Truth of the Christian Religion (*Vérité de la religion chrétienne*),<sup>64</sup> to counterbalance democratic materialism, this dissertation will focus only on that work.

Pascal argues in the *Pensées* that as a principle of *amour-propre* and interest man ought to apply himself with the utmost seriousness to seek his sovereign good-- God-- a most pressing matter for him since as a consequence of his fallen state he is in darkness, existing between the nothingness from which he originates and the infinity to which he is bound. Faced with the certainty of death that threatens him at every instant, man has the choice of one of two possible alternatives: either to live his life seeking the truth to earn eternal salvation or ignore the truth and risk eternal damnation. By presenting to man the reality of his situation from this perspective, Pascal shows the reasonability of making it one's duty to seek to know and love God by adopting the teachings of Christianity, which alone provides the remedy for the wretchedness of the human condition. It is indubitable for him that whether man likes it or not he is embarked in a game of chance that compels him to bet one way or another on the existence of God and the immortality of his soul, a matter of grave importance to morality since it bears on the conduct one would reasonably assume to avoid making an irretrievable mistake for eternity.

The *Pensées* seek to establish that Christianity is the true religion because it is: 1) the only one that teaches the inherent contradiction in man by uncovering the great principle of greatness and the great principle of misery that reign simultaneously in his heart; and 2) the only one that provides the remedy to heal him of the pride and concupiscence that rob him of the happiness that comes only from loving God. Pascal seeks to convince the incredulous of this truth by incessantly reminding them that we are

all mortal and that we live constantly in the shadow of our own inevitable end and that happiness will always elude us as long as God remains hidden from us and that we are powerless to escape the impenetrable darkness that surrounds us and fills us with misery as long as we remain anchored in the material world. He could not accept that man would show himself to be so unconscionable in avoiding the only thing that really matters to him, the immortality of his soul, since he alone among the animals has the ability to think, the quality that constitutes his greatness. "Thinking makes the greatness of man. Man is nothing but a reed, the weakest in nature; but he is a thinking reed...since he knows that he dies...All our dignity consists then in our thought... Let's work then to think well: that [is] the principle of morality."<sup>65</sup> Thus, there can be no morality without cognizance of the indissoluble bond between misery and greatness that defines the human condition in a way that makes one as essential as the other. Without Christianity, which uncovers this truth and offers the hope of redemption as remedy, man is powerless despite all his efforts to attain the happiness he seeks so desperately.

It is in vain, oh man, that you look inside yourselves for the cure of your miseries. All your enlightenment can only bring you to know that it is not at all in yourselves that you will find either truth or goodness. The philosophers promised it to you and they have been unable to do it. They do not know either what is truly good for you, or what your true state is. How could they give remedies to your pains since they do not know them? Your principal illnesses are pride, which removes you from God [and] concupiscence, which attaches you to the world; and they have done nothing but entertain at least one of these illnesses. If they gave you God

for object, it has been only to exercise your greatness: they made you think that you were equal to him and conforming by your nature. And those who saw the vanity of this pretence threw you in the other precipice, by making you believe that your nature was equal to that of the brutes, and brought you to seek your well-being in the concupiscence that is the lot of the animals. It is not the way to cure you of your injustices...<sup>66</sup>

Pascal establishes the moral efficacy of Christianity by comparing it to philosophy to show that the latter encourages man's baseness because it is founded on the error that man is capable of goodness and justice without God. He takes to task the dogmatists and the pyrrhonists who teach falsely that man maintains himself in virtue by his own strength and effort.

When one wants to follow the virtues to their extreme from one end to another, there appears vices that insinuate themselves insensibly in them, in their insensible route, on the side of the small infinity; there appears also vices, in great amount on the side of the great infinity, in such a way that one loses oneself in the vices, and one no longer sees the virtues. One gets oneself caught in the perfection itself. Man is neither angel nor beast, and misfortune wants it that he who wants to make the angel makes the beast.<sup>67</sup>

Philosophy is antithetical to Christianity because it emphasizes either one or the other of the two principles of man's nature, his greatness or his misery, to lead him either to deism or atheism. Pascal insists that "it matters equally to men to know one or the other of these points [man's greatness and his misery]; and it is equally dangerous to man

to know God without knowing his misery, and to know his misery without knowing his Redeemer who can heal him of it. The knowledge of only one of these makes either the arrogance of the philosophers, who have known God and not their miseries, or the despair of the atheists, who know their misery without the hope of the Redeemer.”<sup>68</sup> To know and understand these truths taught by Christianity is to understand that God is partially hidden to man due to his corruption and partially revealed to those who seek Him, hence the reason for which some are saved and others are lost.

Central to Pascal’s teaching is the notion that “faith is a gift of God [which is very different from saying as the philosophers would have one believe] it is a gift of reasoning.”<sup>69</sup> Faith is nothing more than sensing God with our heart and those who have it are inspired by grace, which is a testament of God’s mercy since man is unworthy of it by his corruption. Those who have faith love Him with their heart, the faculty responsible for the knowledge of first principles. His teaching therefore endeavors to show that God in His mercy has enlightened some with faith while others remain in obscurity and thus those for whom God is hidden must seek Him sincerely since He has in His justice left “sensible marks in His Church to make Himself known to them.”<sup>70</sup>

Pascal maintains there are three ways to believe: reason, custom and inspiration. Christianity does not exclude the first two but it insists on the third, which it maintains is available to all men who seek it. Pascal insists that reason, which is dictated by self-interest and thus subject to imagination and error, is not the faculty suited to guide men in this important quest because it is corrupted. Those who misguidedly rely on reason alone to know about the first principles jeopardize their greatest interest since their happiness depends on a truth, which is infinitely incomprehensible to man who as a finite being

cannot know the existence and nature of the infinite Being. “The heart has its reasons that reason does not know... It is the heart that senses God and not reason. That is what faith is: God sensible to the heart, not to reason.”<sup>71</sup> For those who are not fortunate to be inspired by grace, he teaches that faith can be attained not by working to find convincing proofs of God’s existence but by diminishing the passions, which are man’s greatest obstacles.

For one who is without the gift of grace necessary for salvation, Pascal proposes that reason can pave a path to faith until such time the heart becomes inspired with it. Reason aids in this process by opening the mind to the proofs of Christianity, which are in the Scriptures-- the only source of light for man in the otherwise darkness and confusion in which God’s nature and nature proper exists for him-- and the prophecies announcing the coming of a Redeemer to save him from the concupiscence and pride that turns him away from love of God. But for Pascal this enlightenment remains a human faith that is useless for salvation inasmuch as reason can only persuade the mind only as long as it remembers the proofs, which escape it at every turn. Since reason cannot incline the heart to nurture love of God, which for Pascal is synonymous with charity, it is left to customs to confirm the proofs outlined by reason by inclining the body to belief so that the mind easily follows. It is habit then and not reason that leads to belief by inclining our soul to fall naturally in it. “Habit is our nature. Who accustoms himself to faith, believes it, and can no longer not fear hell, and believes nothing else.”<sup>72</sup> Thus, faith is achieved by engaging the mind with the proofs it needs to see only once while the body does the rest by habit. Pascal maintains that faith must be rooted in sentiment and not in



reason to keep it from vacillating and that it is for this reason that the Psalmist says:

*“Inclina cor meum, Deus.”*<sup>73</sup>

Pascal’s thoughtful guideline to belief for those without grace provides Tocqueville a solution to the democratic dilemma inasmuch as it encourages a certain concern with the future, which is the object of religion, to insinuate itself into the democratic mind despite its universal preoccupation with satisfying without delay the needs of the body. In fact, Tocqueville is quick to remark that Pascal’s genius and disinterested love of truth, which brought him “to assemble as he did all the powers of his intellect in order better to discover the most hidden secrets of the Creator,”<sup>74</sup> could only have flourished in an aristocratic society. Thus, if democratic people are to be brought to beliefs, it will have to be by a means other than reason and Pascal’s view that habits can lead the heart to charity appears to Tocqueville an excellent alternative for steering democracy on a moral course.

Tocqueville’s religious doctrine seeks to uncover a midpoint between materialism and spiritualism to keep democratic instincts from falling into one or the other of these two extremes, which he believes are equally fatal to liberty in democracy. Materialism entrenches itself more easily in democracies since it is a small step from an all-consuming disposition to care solely for the needs of the body “to believe that all is nothing but matter [thereby creating a] fatal circle”<sup>75</sup> that becomes as detrimental to the well-being of the body as well as that of the soul. Just as Pascal blames concupiscence for man’s misery by turning him away from God, Tocqueville attributes the cause of the restlessness and anxiety that plagues the American in the midst of his well-being to materialism. In fact, he maintains that materialism inflicts

such a deep wound on the soul that some Americans succumb to an extreme spiritualism to escape the constraints of the body.<sup>76</sup> Tocqueville maintains that this inversion can be as damaging to democratic people insofar as it turns man away from the world and thus destroys all other motive of human actions.

But since Tocqueville is far more concerned about the pernicious effect of materialism than that of spiritualism on democratic people inasmuch as the former particularly corresponds and supports their taste for material well-being, he finds in Pascal's teaching a powerful counterweight to steer them half-way in the opposite direction. He describes the democratic passion for well-being as "a tenacious, exclusive, universal but contained passion,"<sup>77</sup> which naturally occludes the future from man's view by satisfying itself with small comforts achieved without effort and at small cost. For this reason, his teaching reflects a shared conviction with Pascal that the potential for human greatness is inseparable from the belief in an afterlife as the final goal of life and for him this belief is especially desirable in democracy where it moderates the democratic obsession for quick and easy success. Belief in an afterlife is salutary to democratic people because it accustoms them to make little sacrifices everyday to obtain a future reward. From a moral standpoint then materialism is more problematic than spiritualism for Tocqueville inasmuch as its focus on instant gratification weakens man's stamina for the long and often uncertain investment that is part and parcel of great achievements. For him the obvious solution to democracy's endemic problem is to balance man's total absorption with the material world, which deprives the imagination of the desire for the greater goods

that are the source of human greatness, with spiritual nourishment by making religious beliefs the foundation of opinion.

Tocqueville spells out his philosophical position, which is to conciliate the needs of the body with those of the soul, in his initial draft to the chapter titled “How the Excessive Love of Well-Being Can Be Harmful to Well-Being” in volume two, part two, chapter sixteen. Thus, while the bulk of his commentary is addressed to materialism and its proponents, like the Saint Simonians who sought to institute a new morality to “rehabilitate the flesh,”<sup>78</sup> he is also intent on showing to the religious fanatics that spiritualism is not a desirable alternative. He sums up his objective as follows: “I have proven sufficiently to the materialist people that it is to be desired that the taste of well-being does not extinguish the spiritual impulse of the soul...I should also add a small chapter in which turning toward the fanatics I would show that it is in the own interest of the soul that the body flourishes [since] man is neither pure spirit nor pure animal [but both].”<sup>79</sup>

Echoing Pascal for whom religion must take into account man’s dual nature, Tocqueville affirms that a man who neglects one or the other aspect of his nature to fall into an extreme materialism or spiritualism risks degrading and turning himself into a brute. “If men ever came to be contented with material goods, it is to be believed that little by little they would lose the art of producing them, and that in the end they would enjoy them without discernment and without progress, like brutes.”<sup>80</sup> Likewise, Tocqueville shows how spiritualism can produce a similar effect on man. In his initial draft of the chapter titled “Why Certain Americans Display Such an Exalted Spiritualism” he recounts how he instinctively recoiled from a raucous scene

he witnessed in America where a Methodist preacher managed to rouse a crowd of worshippers to convulsive repentance by depicting for it the inexhaustible divine retribution that awaits man to punish his perverseness.

I ran away filled with disgust and penetrated by a deep terror.

Author and conservator of all things, I told myself, can it be that you recognize yourself in the horrible portrait that your creatures make of you here? Must man be degraded by fear so that he can be lifted up to you, and would he not know how to climb to the rank of your saints without giving himself to these outbursts that make him descend below the brutes?<sup>81</sup>

Time only seemed to have reinforced his conviction that spiritualism no less than materialism must be balanced to prevent it from inflicting harm to human dignity. Following his last visit to England a couple of years before his death he writes the following to Kergolay.

I confess to you I have always (*in petto*) considered a book like The Imitation of Jesus Christ for example, when one considers it other than a teaching destined for cloister life, as supremely immoral. It is not healthy to detach oneself from the world, from its pleasures, when they are honest, to the point that the author teaches and those who live by the reading of such a book cannot fail besides to lose all that makes the public virtues in acquiring certain private virtues. A certain preoccupation with religious truths not going as far as the absorption of the thought in the

other world, has therefore always appeared to me the most conforming state of human morality under all its forms.<sup>82</sup>

Tocqueville's organization of part two of the second volume reflects his commitment to foster religious beliefs that equilibrate between the needs of the body and those of soul. Thus, while he accepts Pascal's view of the tension inherent in human nature, he nonetheless disagrees in principle with the doctrine of predestination that defines Pascal's rigid Catholic orthodoxy since it is clearly incompatible with his humanistic and liberal approach to religion. For him religion will be successful in democracy only if it fulfills the following objectives: 1) serves as the guarantor of the freedom, public peace and social order that material prosperity needs to flourish; and 2) provides not only the spiritual nourishment that satisfies a universal human longing but also compels the mind to contemplate the future by placing the rewards for the sacrifices of this life in the hereafter. This section then, which is the last he devotes on the whole to religion in his commentary, must be considered his final word on the subject.

The religious teaching of Tocqueville, *l'homme politique*, has clearly a very different objective than that of Pascal, the polemist, and thus it hints obliquely toward its end unlike that of his mentor, which unambiguously and unconditionally tends toward the inspiration of divine faith. Human faith, i.e., the one generated by habits, is good enough for Tocqueville because it leads to morality in this world, which is an important initial step toward contemplating that which lies beyond the mundane and immediate cares that fill democratic aspirations. This is exemplified by his tacit approval of the methodical approach of the American to religion. The belief of

Tocqueville's American far from being divinely inspired is dictated by the interest he has in the utility of religion to guide opinions toward order, which in turn enables the passion for material well-being to flourish. Although it is a practice that begins as pure calculation to satisfy material interest, nonetheless, it initiates overtime the habits that can potentially inspire the heart to beliefs, therein its merit. For this reason, it is good enough for Tocqueville who believes that unless religion accommodates democracy's predominant passion it will not succeed in inculcating in man the habit of thinking about his future-- an outlook that is beneficial to him man in this life as well as the afterlife. In sum, Tocqueville considers religion in a way that fulfills both a political and human need and he is able to realize his complex two-pronged objective by adopting selected elements from the teachings of Pascal, Rousseau and Montesquieu.

Always cognizant of the democratic mind's indomitable distaste for abstraction, Tocqueville simplifies Christian dogmas in a way that brings into focus an affinity between him and Rousseau. Moreover, because democracy propels man toward materialism by making him focus primarily on the needs of the body, Tocqueville insists that religion must accommodate this propensity and in this respect he shows himself the disciple of Montesquieu for whom the remedy must be suited to the inclination to which the regime gives rise. Finally, materialism being of greater concern to him because it is the malady of democracy, he exhorts his compatriots to return to their Christian tradition by invoking Pascal's argument that it is in man's interest to bet on the existence of God and the immortality of his soul.

Although Tocqueville does not embrace Pascal's austere orthodoxy, he uses his stirring language in a way that is consistent with Montesquieu's view of virtue, i.e., interest imitates virtue when it functions as the basis of common action. Tocqueville adduces the American's use of religion as a pillar of liberty to support his innovative religious doctrine as a democratic necessity. One glimpses his rationale for reconciling Pascal's religious teaching with Montesquieu's political philosophy in a rough draft for the first volume in which he explains the following comment about the Americans' attitude toward religion. "Most of them think that the knowledge of self-interest well-understood is enough to lead man toward the just and the honest."<sup>83</sup> His interpretation of Montesquieu's concept of republican virtue enables him to combine it with Pascal's use of interest as a powerful incentive to lead man to beliefs in a way that harmonizes with democracy's penchant for material well-being.

That which he [Montesquieu] understands by virtue is the moral force that each individual exercises over himself and which prevents him from violating the right of others. When this triumph of man on the temptations is the result of the weakness of the temptation or a calculation of personal interest it does not constitute virtue in the eyes of the moralist; but it follows the idea of Montesquieu who spoke of the effect much more than the cause. In America it is not virtue that is great, it is the temptation that is small, which comes to the same thing. It is not disinterest that is great, it is the interest that is well-understood, which also comes to the same thing.<sup>84</sup>

Tocqueville collapses his reading of Montesquieu with Pascal's view-- both of which appeal to interest, albeit toward different ends-- to show that public virtue, which is essential to liberty, is especially dependent in democracy on the morality religion fosters. He finds support for the effectiveness of his method in religion itself, which has always used the idea of interest well-understood to inculcate in human beings the habit of thinking about the afterlife. The Americans have adjusted this aged-old religious practice to the democratic taste for material wealth by showing that it brings tangible benefits as well in this world. Tocqueville sanctions the American's doctrine of self-interest well-understood precisely because it encapsulates the teaching of Montesquieu on practical affairs and Pascal's guide to religious beliefs in a way that serves the cause of liberty.

Nevertheless, Tocqueville maintains that he resorts to a utilitarian argument to promote religion only because he accepts democratic mediocrity as an irrefutable fact. He argues that since men can no longer be motivated by lofty principles under a system of equality, the only way to bring them to moral virtue is by way of something within everyone's reach. He finds that an enlightened self-interest is a powerful incentive toward that objective inasmuch as it brings to light the material compensations to be obtained by subduing the passions. On the political level, it transforms democratic individualism into communal involvement and on the religious side, it accustoms man to place the object of life beyond this life. His endorsement then of self-interest well-understood as a moral code of conduct is a product of careful deliberation based on the particular circumstances that prevail under a system of equality. The following comment in his draft for the chapter on this subject supports this study's view. "If morality was strong enough on its own, I would not find it so important to lean on utility. If the idea of



the just was more powerful, I would not speak as much on the idea of utility...It is because I see that morality is weak that I want to put it under the safeguard of interest.”<sup>85</sup>

Thus, using Montesquieu’s concept of virtue and Pascal’s challenge to man to wager on the side of immortality, Tocqueville makes a utilitarian argument to promote the advantage of religion over philosophy in the tradition of Rousseau’s Savoyard Vicar, i.e., to maintain a balance between religion and philosophy to avoid fanaticism on the one hand and on the other skepticism,<sup>86</sup> or materialism in the case of democratic people. However, unlike Rousseau-- whose teaching shows an equal distrust for religion and philosophy-- Tocqueville combines religion, which puts the goal of life in the afterlife and thus enjoins man to think about the future, with the rational method of philosophy to combat democratic materialism. This approach creates an affinity between him and Pascal who found it equally advantageous to appeal to interest to cure the irreligion of his time. “This idea [the notion of interest tied to religion] which does not appear to me worthy of the great soul of Pascal summarizes perfectly the state of souls in countries where reason is strengthening itself while religious beliefs are faltering.”<sup>87</sup>

Pascal’s exhortation to man to acquire the moral habits that inspire the heart to belief and his appeal to interest to encourage these habits are useful to Tocqueville since the motivation he provides for doing so is by far the one most conformable to democratic inclination. It is not surprising then to see Tocqueville invert Rousseau’s dictum that “the body must be vigorous in order to obey the soul,”<sup>88</sup> with his own assertion that “the soul must remain great and strong, if only to be able from time to time to put its force and its greatness in the service of the body.”<sup>89</sup> By confining his debt to Pascal to his appeal to interest and habits to bring democratic man to beliefs, Tocqueville is able to formulate a

religious doctrine for democracy that tempers materialism and makes religion a pillar of liberty in the tradition of the enlightenment, with the caveat that he substitutes Rousseau's omnipresent God for Pascal's hidden God. In short, by infusing Pascal's perspective with the lessons of the enlightenment, Tocqueville arrives at showing the advantage to man in democracy of turning his gaze from time to time toward the future to disabuse him of his obsession with the present.

Tocqueville's ever-present fear of the political consequences of materialism, which in nineteenth century France proved repeatedly to be a sure and certain path to despotism, brings him to advocate elevating pride to a virtue in democracy-- a compromise that further reflects his selective approach to the teachings of Pascal, Rousseau and Montesquieu. This accommodation is unmistakably contrary to Pascal's belief that the concupiscence of pride turns man away from goodness and justice and Rousseau's warning that pride as a product of *amour-propre* can be an instrument of compassion as well as the misanthropy and untruth he associates with philosophy and intolerance he connects with religion. But, Tocqueville has the greater concern of instilling in his countrymen the dignity that makes liberty its predominant care and he recognizes that the mediocre ambitions democracy favors encourage complacency in way that is harmful to his cause. In advocating pride over humility for democratic people he shows himself the faithful heir of Montesquieu who believes that the character of a nation is formed by a mixture of virtues and vices and from this combination it results sometimes that moral virtues have the pernicious effect of vices and political vices imitate virtue by the overall benefit they bring.<sup>90</sup> Tocqueville like Montesquieu wants

less to obscure the infinite distance between vices and virtues than to underline that their mixture produces unintended effects.

Tocqueville defends his departure from the traditional Catholic teaching of Pascal by arguing that the Church's teaching on humility restrains the noble ambitions that lead to human greatness in democracy. He affirms that man's aspiration in this regime is irrevocably lowered by the competitiveness for limited resources compelling his soul to put all its efforts into mediocre undertakings. His advocacy of pride in this context is based less on moral than on political considerations. In fact, his position on pride is consistent with his advocacy for religion inasmuch as he argues that the great advantage of each in democracy is to compel man to think about the future. For Tocqueville it is indisputable that great human achievements are possible only in a society in which a future-oriented outlook is cultivated. "[F]ar from believing that one must recommend humility to our contemporaries, I should want one to strive to give them a vaster idea of themselves and of their species; humility is not healthy for them; what they lack most in my opinion, is pride. I would willingly trade several of our small virtues for this vice."<sup>91</sup>

Sanford Kessler for whom Tocqueville's religious teaching replicates Rousseau's civil religion points to his promotion of pride as a virtue as an example of his lack of commitment to the traditional, revealed Christianity embraced by Pascal. It is not difficult to see how Tocqueville's modification of Christianity could be interpreted this way unless equal consideration is given to his ingrained aristocratic perspective as well as the complex intellectual influence that guides his analysis of democracy. Tocqueville was well aware of the danger that pride poses to human happiness and his own experience with it has a bittersweet quality that on the one hand, inspires in him the self-confidence

to accomplish great deeds that is the mark of his nobility, and on the other, vindicates for him Pascal's warning about its peril. In the first instance, Tocqueville demonstrates the general spirit of his caste for vast ambitions in a letter in which he outlines his project for the last great work he produced, *L'Ancien régime et la révolution*.

I believe myself thus in a better state than I was when I wrote the *Démocratie* to treat well a great subject of political literature...I have the pride to believe that I have more than anyone the distinctive characteristic to bring to such a subject a great freedom of mind and to speak without passion and without reservations of the men and the things [of that era]...I don't have any traditions, I don't have any party, I don't have any cause if it is not that of liberty and human dignity.<sup>92</sup>

In the second instance Tocqueville reveals how pride causes him to suffer a great spiritual lassitude.

I have finally returned home [to the Tocqueville chateau] since a few days. I should be happy and tranquil. I am agitated and worried. Why? That is difficult enough to untangle myself. Because after all I don't have to complain of my fate. I possess in the area of domestic happiness, I believe, all that is given to man to have in this world and as to external goods, I am scarcely more mistreated than my contemporaries. Nevertheless, I am habitually somber and troubled. I attribute this tiring and sterile state of the soul sometime to one cause, sometime to another. But I think at bottom it is attached to one only that is profound and permanent, the discontent with myself. You know there are two types of

prides, very distinct or rather the same pride has two faces, one sad and one cheerful. There is a pride that pays itself with the delight of the advantages which it enjoys or believes to enjoy. That is called, I think, presumption. Since God wanted to send me the emptiness of a great dose of pride he should well have, at least, sent me the one that belongs to this first type. But the one I possess is of an altogether contrary nature. It is always anxious and discontented. Not envious though, but melancholic and black. It shows me at every turn all the faculties that I lack and their absence drives me to despair.<sup>93</sup>

Tocqueville is fully cognizant that he is stricken with the illness of the soul for which Pascal provides an excellent rationale. Throughout his correspondence he consistently complains to his friends about his black melancholia, which began to assail him soon after his encounter with the thinkers of the enlightenment who provoked his unshakable doubt and prevented him from enjoying the consolation of Pascal's religion. Tocqueville's awareness of the deprivation he suffers recalls Pascal's perspective on the gift of grace. In a letter in which he remembers his father who, unlike him, never strayed from the religious instruction he received from their Jansenist preceptor, Abbé Lesueur, he states: "I saw in my father what I have until now seen only in him, the presence of religion entirely in the least actions of his life at every minute. His life and death have been for me the great proof of the excellence of religion. They filled me with an ardent desire to believe. But, alas! Who is master to do it if God does not intervene?"<sup>94</sup>

Tocqueville appears to mourn his lost of faith as much as he grieves the death of his father in this personal avowal to his friend Corcelle, a zealous Catholic convert.

Nevertheless, his affinity with Pascal on the subject of divine grace remains a personal struggle that never insinuates itself in his commentary except perhaps to intensify his exhortation that religion must occupy the preeminent place among the institutions of democracy by insisting that democracy cannot subsist without the moral precepts of Christianity. France provides him empirical evidence that the philosophy of the enlightenment alone is not enough to combat the democratic restlessness caused by the yearning for a perfect and elusive equality that undermines liberty. Borrowing Pascal's language allows Tocqueville to go beyond Montesquieu and Rousseau-- both of whom concede that religion is desirable to order political life-- to affirm that in democracy it is not only the sole foundation of stability amid perpetual agitation but also to show that it is the spring of human dignity. Thus, Tocqueville's democratic religion aims to promote liberty not only by teaching that moral conformity is necessary to political life but also by showing that Christianity alone provides man solace from the anxiety and sometimes the despair generated by the unreasonable hopes and desires equality nurtures.

In the final analysis, Tocqueville's religious doctrine must be assessed from the perspective that it is formulated to make reason and habits the means for recapturing the religious instinct that disappeared with aristocracy. His teaching reflects his conviction that liberty would remain unattainable as long as the intractable climate of instable desires democracy fosters is joined to the irreligion that characterized the bourgeois monarchy of Louis-Philippe in France. In such a political climate, he believes that the only way to bring men to religion is by an indirect route along which they are shown that prosperity is achieved by resisting fleeting passions for a great undertaking. To this end, he urges political leaders to set a good example by putting in place a system of

meritocracy to replace that of favors so that progress is seen as the fulfillment of an ambition obtained by slow and painstaking effort. His legacy then must be evaluated on the basis of his firm and enduring conviction that it is by appealing to men's interest that one succeeds in bringing them through habit little by little to religion unbeknownst to them. He expresses best the motive of his religious doctrine in the final chapter dedicated to this subject in the second part of volume two.

I therefore do not doubt that in habituating citizens to think of the future in this world, one would bring them little by little and without their knowing it to religious beliefs. Thus the means that permit men up to a certain point to do without religion is perhaps, after all, the only one remaining to us to lead the human race by a long detour back toward faith.<sup>95</sup>

---

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Montesquieu, The Spirit of the Laws, trans. and ed., Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller and Harold Samuel Stone, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pt. 5, bk. 25, chap. 2, 479.

<sup>2</sup> Whereas Rousseau points to the diversity of religions and their competing truths as valid reasons to doubt revelations and the Scriptures, Pascal argues that Christianity is the true religion because it is the only one which proclaims : “*Vere tu es Deus absconditus.*” God must be hidden for man to sense his corruption and to seek a remedy for it. “Thus, it is not only just, but useful for us that God be hidden in part, and revealed in part, since it is equally dangerous for man to know God without knowing his misery, and to know his misery without knowing God.” Pascal, Pensées, texte de l’édition Brunschvicg, édition précédé de la vie de Pascal par Mme Périer, sa soeur, intro. et notes Ch.-M. des Granges, (Paris: Editions Garnier-Frères, 1964), nos. 585 & 586, 225.

<sup>3</sup> Even though Tocqueville was for a brief period a minister of the Napoléon government, he considered Napoléon’s ambition the nearest threatening danger to France. Louis Napoléon was first elected president on December 10, 1848 for one-term of four years according to the Constitution of June 1848. Tocqueville was a member of the constitutional assembly and was therefore very familiar with the deliberations for each article of the Constitution. Tocqueville learned during his tenure as minister of a plot formed in July 1849 by a combined enterprise of the President and the majority leaders of the National Assembly to alter the Constitution by force. From the beginning of his tenure as minister he made it his personal objective “to prevent the overthrow of the



---

Republic and especially to hinder the establishment of the bastard monarchy of Louis Napoléon.” After learning about the plot he applied all his skill at preventing Napoléon from plunging into some dangerous enterprise by flattering his ambition to restrain him. Thus, he explicitly told Napoléon “I will never serve you in overthrowing the republic; but I will gladly strive to assure you a great position in it, and I believe that all my friends will end by entering into my plan. The Constitution can be revised; Article 45, which prohibits re-election, can be changed. This is an object which we will gladly help you to attain.” Tocqueville knew the chances for revision were doubtful, so he hinted that if Napoléon governed France peacefully, wisely and modestly, he might possibly be re-elected at the end of his term in office, in spite of Article 45, by an almost unanimous vote. Nevertheless, in March 1851 a committee was organized for the re-election of Louis Napoléon. On December 2 of that year Napoléon made himself president for life by a *coup d'état*. On December 2, 1852 he proclaimed himself emperor making himself the master of France. Alexis de Tocqueville, The Recollections of Alexis de Tocqueville, ed., intro., J. P. Mayer, (London: The Harvill Press, 1948), 255 & 268.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to Francisque de Corcelle, December 28, 1854, in Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Francisque de Corcelle, correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Madame Swetchine, ed. J. P. Mayer, texte établi par Pierre Gibert, soumis pour contrôle et approbation à Claude Bressollette et André Jardin, (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), tome XV, 129. (Hereinafter reference to this work will be shown as OC XV).

<sup>5</sup> Letter to Francisque de Corcelle, September 17, 1853, in *ibid.*, 81-82.

<sup>6</sup> Letter to Francisque de Corcelle, May 13, 1852, in *ibid.*, 55-56.

---

<sup>7</sup> Letter to Francisque de Corcelle, September 17, 1853, in *ibid.*, 81.

<sup>8</sup> The Rome affair is the culmination of a succession of events connected to the series of revolutions beginning in 1789 to establish democracy in France. The revolution of 1789 after having expelled the pope from Rome ended by making him prisoner of the first Napoléon. The revolution of 1830 provoked the uprising of the roman states allowing the French to take possession of Ancône and make the reform of the temporal government of the pope a European affair. The effect of the 1848 revolution was a little different at least for a time insofar as it was Pope Pius IX who appeared to take on his own initiative the direction of a liberal movement by effectuating social and political reforms in his states. He also pronounced himself against the domination and intervention of Austria in the roman peninsula to the point of appearing before his own troops as the guarantor of Italian independence. Nevertheless, on April 29, 1848 following the February revolution that overthrew King Louis-Philippe of France, he published an encyclical declaring himself opposed to any intervention on his behalf against the war between the Piedmont and Austria. In other words, he was retracting his previously favorable engagements to an independent and eventual unification of Italy. At the same time he revealed himself incontestably opposed to Italian independence and thus leaving Austria with a free hand to intervene in the peninsula. The defeat of Austria by the king of Piedmont on Mars 23, 1849, was followed by violent insurrections in Rome, which forced the pope to flee and to take refuge in the states of the king of Naples. These series of events placed France in the doubtful position of finding a political solution to reconcile the temporal power of the pope with the demands of the republican revolutionaries for liberalization. France faced

---

the difficult choice of supporting the revolution against papal power or supporting this power against the revolution.

Corcelle was assigned by his former classmate, General Louis Eugène Cavaignac, then military dictator of the second French republic, on November 24, 1848 to act as Envoy Extraordinary to Civita-Vecchia to assure the security and liberty of the pope and his momentary retreat to France. Meanwhile, on November 26, Pius IX took refuge at Gaète after making a diverging maneuver to change the course of his ship to make believe he was leaving for France. The pope uncertain of the outcome of the upcoming December elections in France and having greater confidence in Austria had decided to refuse the offer of exile proposed to him by the French government.

The Roman affair took a different turn in 1849 after Louis-Napoléon was elected president of the republic on December 10, 1848. Tocqueville assumed the responsibility of Foreign Minister on June 2, 1849. French public opinion was not favorable to an intervention in Rome by the republican government of France, which aimed to overthrow the roman republic. There were two determining factors for France's intervention in the Rome affair in 1849: 1) the need to lend assistance to the head of the Catholic Church, to safeguard the rights of conscience of the overwhelming Catholic majority of the country; and 2) the impossibility of giving free reign to Austria to restore solely the pontifical government and the fear that if France did not take preemptive action in the interest of the church and its national greatness Austria would gain an unacceptable influence in Italy that could become the cause of a general European war. The French government was very much divided on the subject of intervening in the Rome affair. While some did not want Austria to act alone, others displayed strong sympathies for the roman republic.

---

But, upholding this republic would cause France to become isolated from the European nations which supported the Holy Father and would not hesitate to take arms against France to defend the pope. In addition to the division in the French government and the clamor of French public opinion, there were also misunderstandings between the French army posted in Italy and its diplomatic representatives in that country that further complicated the situation.

Such was the imbroglio Tocqueville inherited when he was handed his ministerial portfolio. He quickly assigned his Friend Corcelle to act as Special Envoy of the republic to Rome. For Tocqueville the situation was clear if complicated. He inherited a situation not of his making whose utility he admitted was doubtful but he was prepared to take courageously all responsibilities for its outcome. *Homme politique* and ever conscientious of his ministerial responsibility, he had to assume a political posture whose implications he could not ignore in Paris or Rome. He agreed that the pope should return to Rome and for this eventuality he was prepared to use all the means at his disposal, including the contingent of French troops already positioned in Italy. But, he did not intend to do it at any price and especially not at the price of an absolutist restoration that would negate all previous liberal reforms, political as well as social.

If Corcelle assumed his responsibility with as much a cool head as Tocqueville, he nonetheless was a product of the religious sentimentality that represents so well the romantic spirit of the nineteenth century. The French church having lost its spiritual and cultural power and emptied of its resources, including its theological system of education, after the 1789 Revolution compensated for this loss in the nineteenth century by developing the practice of piety through various organized manifestations of faith,

---

including the construction of churches, processions, pilgrimages, etc. Anything that appealed to the sentiments, all that caused emotions for the faith to be aroused was developed. These conditions created throughout the nineteenth century a progressive attachment to the person of the pope and caused the transformation of the proud gallicanism that was the mark of French Catholicity into the ultramontism that so well expressed this need to attach oneself to the tangible manifestations of the faith of the church and to Rome. Corcelle belongs to those who seduced by the personality of Pius IX reacted to him emotionally. He found himself engaged in a politico-diplomatic imbroglio that brought him back progressively to a forgotten or insufficiently enlightened faith. His reactions and expressions in his correspondence with Tocqueville are filled with effusive comments about his meetings with the pope. Tocqueville on more than one occasion shows his impatience both on the personal as well as the political level with Corcelle's sentimentality. While Tocqueville never ceased to see the clearly dishonest political game of the roman side of the affair, Corcelle could only see "the pontifical government" and all the confusion this expression incorporates regarding the temporal power, the political and the spiritual power. The tension between the two friends reached its nadir on October 2 when an exasperated Corcelle tended to Tocqueville his request for an immediate resignation. Ibid., 11-47 passim.

<sup>9</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Letter from Arthur de Gobineau to Alexis de Tocqueville, October 16, 1843, in Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et d'Arthur de Gobineau, édition définitive publiée sous la direction de J. P. Mayer, texte établi et annoté par M. Degros, introduction par Jean-Jacques Chevalier, avertissement de

---

J. P. Mayer, (Paris: Gallimard, 1959) tome IX, 64. (Hereafter reference to this work will be shown as OC IX).

<sup>10</sup> Tocqueville, Recollections, 106.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men” in The First and Second Discourses, ed. Roger D. Masters, trans. Roger D. and Judith R. Masters, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1964), 103.

<sup>12</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract, trans. & intro. Maurice Cranston, (New York: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1968), bk. 4, chap. 8, 182.

<sup>13</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile or On Education, intro., trans. & notes Allan Bloom, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1979), bk. 4, 295.

<sup>14</sup> Letter to Arthur de Gobineau, October 2, 1843, in OC IX, 58. See also Alexis de Tocqueville, “The European Revolution” & Correspondence with Gobineau, intro., ed., & trans. John Lukacs, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1959), 206.

<sup>15</sup> Tocqueville has a very negative view of Islam, the only other monotheistic religion that offered itself for comparison with respect to its compatibility with democracy since there was no Jewish state in the nineteenth century. He criticizes Mohammed in Democracy in America because he mixes indiscriminately human and divine laws, an approach that is antithetical to his advocacy of keeping these two things separate. Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, trans., ed., & intro., Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 2000, vol. 2, pt. 2, chap. 5, 419. See also Oeuvres II, De la démocratie en Amérique, édition publiée sous la direction d’André Jardin avec, pour ce volume, la collaboration de Jean-Claude Lamberti et James T. Schleifer, (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), vol. 2, pt. 2, chap. 5, 533-534. (Hereinafter reference

---

to this work will be shown as DA, vol., pt., chap. with the page number of the English translation appearing first and that of the French text second and the two separated by a slash, e.g., DA, II, 2, 5, 419/533-534).

Tocqueville read the 1783 Savary translation of the Q'uran in March 1838. This translation of the Arabic text contained notes and an abbreviated introduction of the Prophet Mohammed's life taken from the works of the most esteemed Arabic scholars. He took notes on the first eighteen chapters, which are published in the Pléiade édition of the *Oeuvres complètes*, tome III, p. 134-162. Oeuvres II, De la démocratie en Amérique, II, 1, 5, 534 note 1 on p. 1094.

Furthermore, we glimpse in his private correspondence other concerns he raises about Islam's inherent flaws, which for him makes it incompatible with democracy. Writing to Corcelle on March 19, 1838 he states that the "Q'uran is a clever transaction between spiritualism and materialism, the angel and the brute." OC XV, 98. Despite his overall condemnation of Islam, this comment reflects Tocqueville's own attempt to find a balance between these two tendencies, which equality fosters. It is noteworthy that this letter is written while he is engaged in the project of formulating his religious doctrine in the second volume of Democracy in America.

Likewise, writing to Kergolay on May 23, 1941 from Algeria he provides an assessment of the challenge facing France's colonial project in that country by alluding to Islam's tendency to foster fanaticism. "Colonialism will be easy but its result always precarious. Those who had hoped for a genuine peace with Abd el-Kader are mistaken. He cannot do it, if he wanted for two reasons: I was telling you that the only common sentiment that connects the tribes was fanaticism. It is only by exploiting fanaticism that he can be

---

strong, and he can exploit it only through war.” Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d’Alexis de Tocqueville et de Louis de Kergolay, ed. J. P.

Mayer, texte établi par André Jardin, intro. & notes Jean-Alain Lesourd, (Paris:

Gallimard, 1977), tome XIII, 86. (hereafter reference to this work will be shown as OC XIII).

Lastly, it is worth reproducing here a passage already quoted elsewhere in this study, which unmistakably captures Tocqueville’s negative view of Islam. In the course of his interminable arguments with Gobineau about the superiority of Christianity he states the following in a letter, October 22, 1843. “I have often studied the Q’uran when concerned with our relations with the Moslem populations of Algiers and the Orient. I must say that I emerged convinced that there are in the entire world few religions with such morbid consequences as that of Mohammed. To me it is the primary cause of the now visible decadence of the Islamic world, and though it may be less absurd than the polytheism of the ancients, its political and social tendencies being in my view, more to be feared, I regard it relative to paganism itself more as a setback than a progress.” OC IX, 69. See also “The European Revolution” & Correspondence with Gobineau, 212

<sup>16</sup> Letter to Francisque de Corcelle, September 3, 1856, in OC XV, 175.

<sup>17</sup> The Social Contract, bk. 4, chap. 8, 181.

<sup>18</sup> Tocqueville, Recollections, 120.

<sup>19</sup> DA, II, 2, 15, 521/660.

<sup>20</sup> In 1762 Rousseau’s Emile was condemned by the parliament of Paris forcing him to flee from France. Subsequently, he had to flee Geneva where he was wanted.

Afterwards, he was expelled from the Canton of Berne. From that time, Rousseau-- the



victim of political and religious intolerance-- was harried from place to place in search of a refuge. See Maurice Cranston's Introduction to The Social Contract, 24-25.

<sup>21</sup> Rousseau praises Mohammed's religion for giving unity to his political system. *Ibid.*, bk. 4, chap. 8, 179. The reader will recall that Tocqueville castigates Mohammed's religion precisely for this reason. See note 15 above.

<sup>22</sup> Letter to Arthur de Gobineau, October 2, 1843, in OC IX, 57-58. See also "The European Revolution" & Correspondence with Gobineau, 205-206.

<sup>23</sup> Letter to Francisque de Corcelle, August 28, 1856, in OC XV, 172.

<sup>24</sup> Rousseau prefaces the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" by telling the reader that the Vicar's interlocutor is a young expatriate in an Italian city who was born a Calvinist. He concludes the Savoyard Vicar's reflections on religious opinions with the advice he gives to the young man. "Go back to your country, return to the religion of your fathers, follow it in the sincerity of your heart, and never leave it again. It is very simple and very holy. I believe that of all the religions on earth it is the one which has the purest morality and which is most satisfactory to reason." This apparent concession does not in any way suggest that Rousseau is better disposed toward Calvinism than he is toward other Christian sects. The doctrine of predestination, one of the fundamental dogmas of Calvinism, is certainly one that he finds repugnant to reason. Rousseau emphatically rejects the idea that some men are born with grace and others are not. Rousseau, Emile, bk. 4, 260, 301 & 311.

Tocqueville as a general principle rejects the idea of predestination, particularly when it has no other purpose than to explain materialist doctrines and promote them. For him, predestination belongs to the set of ideas most dangerous to democratic times because it

---

reinforces the democratic instinct to embrace materialistic theories. Thus, whereas Rousseau rejects predestination as a spiritual doctrine, Tocqueville seems to reprove it particularly when it is aligned with materialism. He states his position on the distinction he makes between predestination as a spiritual concept and as a materialist concept in his admonishment of Gobineau whose essay on the inequality of the races he finds truly offensive. "Your doctrine in fact is rather a sort of fatalism, of predestination if you will; different at any rate from that of St. Augustine, the Jansenists and the Calvinists (it is the last ones who resemble you the most by the absolutism of the doctrine) since you tie very closely together predestination and matter. You continually speak about races regenerating or degenerating, losing or acquiring through an infusion of new blood social capacities which they have not previously had- I think these are your own words. This kind of predestination it seems to me, I will admit, is a close cousin of the purest materialism and be sure that if the crowd, which always follows in its reasoning the most beaten tracks would admit your doctrine this would lead it straight from races to individuals and from social capacities to all sorts of potentialities. In any case, whether fatality is introduced directly in the material order of things, or whether God willed to make different human species so that He imposed special obligations on certain men, as a result of the race to which they belong, not to have certain sentiments, certain thoughts, certain habits, certain qualities that they know without being able to acquire them, this matters little to my concern, which is that of the practical consequences of these different philosophical doctrines. The two theories have the consequence of putting a great limitation, if not a complete abolition, on human liberty. Thus, I confess to you that after having read your book I remain as before opposed in the extreme to these doctrines. I

---

believe them to be very probably false and very certainly very pernicious.” Letter, November 17, 1853, in OC IX, 202.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, bk. 4, 308.

<sup>26</sup> The Social Contract, bk. 4, chap. 8, 181.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, bk. 4, chap. 8, 182.

<sup>28</sup> Rousseau, Emile, bk. 4, 235 note.

<sup>29</sup> The Social Contract, bk. 2, chap. 6, 83.

<sup>30</sup> Rousseau, Emile, bk. 4, 312-313 note.

<sup>31</sup> DA, II, 1, 5, 418/531.

<sup>32</sup> The Social Contract, bk. 4, chap. 8, 186.

<sup>33</sup> DA, II, 1, 5, 418/532.

<sup>34</sup> The Social Contract, bk. 3, chap. 4, 114.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, bk. 4, chap. 8, 182.

<sup>36</sup> DA, II, 2, 15, 520/660.

<sup>37</sup> Rousseau, Emile, bk. 4, 300.

<sup>38</sup> DA, II, 1, 5, 423/538.

<sup>39</sup> DA, II, 1, 17, 458/583-584.

<sup>40</sup> Tocqueville targets Adolphe Thiers whose *Histoire de La révolution* he condemns for its inversion of the limits of good and evil. In a letter to Pierre-Paul Royer-Collard, December 6, 1836, Tocqueville describes the negative effect his reading of the book had on him. “L’Histoire de la révolution caused me a singular horror and the most violent antipathy for its author.” Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes, correspondance d’Alexis de Tocqueville et de Pierre-Paul Royer-Collard: correspondance d’Alexis de

---

Tocqueville et de Jean-Jacques Ampère, ed. J. P. Mayer, texte établi, annoté et préfacé par André Jardin, (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), tome XI, 29-30.

Tocqueville addresses his distaste for the general theories that is the preferred system of those he considers mediocre historians in his Recollections. “I have come across men of letters, who have written history without taking part in public affairs, and politicians, who have only concerned themselves with producing events without thinking of describing them. I have observed that the first are always inclined to find general causes, whereas the others, living in the midst of disconnected daily facts, are prone to imagine that everything is attributable to particular incidents, and that the wires which they pull are the same that move the world. It is to be presumed that both are equally deceived.

For my part, I detest these absolute systems, which represent all the events of history as depending upon great first causes linked by the chain of fatality, and which, as it were, suppress men from the history of the human race. They seem narrow, to my mind, under the pretense of broadness, and false beneath their air of mathematical exactness. I believe (pace the writers who have invented these sublime theories in order to feed their vanity and facilitate their work) that many important historical facts can only be explained by accidental circumstances, and that many others remain totally inexplicable. Moreover, chance, or rather that tangle of secondary causes which we call chance, for want of the knowledge how to unravel it, plays a great part in all that happens on the world’s stage; although I firmly believe that chance does nothing that has not been prepared beforehand. Antecedent facts, the nature of institutions, the cast of minds and the state of morals are the materials of which are composed those impromptus which astonish and alarm us.

---

The Revolution of February [1848], in common with all other great events of this class, sprang from general causes, impregnated, if I am permitted the expression, by accidents; and it would be as superficial a judgment to ascribe it necessarily to the former or exclusively to the latter.” Alexis de Tocqueville, The Recollections of Alexis de Tocqueville, trans., Alexander Teixeira de Mattos, ed. & intro. J. P. Mayer, (London: The Harvill Press, 1948) 67-68.

<sup>41</sup> Tocqueville concludes Democracy in America the way he began by attributing to Providence the movement of the world toward democracy. He states in his introduction that “[t]he gradual development of equality of conditions is therefore a providential fact, and it has the principal characteristics of one: it is universal, it is enduring, each day it escapes human power...” DA, 6/7

Likewise, he affirms at the end of his analysis of democracy that “[i]t is natural to believe that what most satisfies the regard of this creator and preserver of men is not the singular prosperity of some, but the greatest well-being of all... equality is perhaps less elevated; but it is more just, and its justice makes for its greatness and its beauty.” DA, II, 4, 8, 674-675/852.

<sup>42</sup> DA, II, 1, 17, 463/589.

<sup>43</sup> *Pensées*, no. 72, 88-91.

<sup>44</sup> DA, II, 1, 17, 462/588-589.

<sup>45</sup> Tocqueville “admired Lamartine as the greatest French poet of their time” and according to his biographer, André Jardin, borrowed from his preface of Jocelyn the idea that the destiny of man would become the source of democratic poetry. André Jardin,

---

Tocqueville, A Biography, trans. Lydia Davis & Robert Hemenway, (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1988), 258-259.

Nevertheless, if Tocqueville admired the poet in Lamartine he did not appreciate his leftist politics in which he revealed himself as the personification of the human depravity Pascal condemns. Lamartine was his colleague in the Chamber of Deputies and

Tocqueville paints a scathing portrait of his political character in his Recollections.

“Lamartine was the last man to sacrifice himself in this way [allowing himself to be gloriously defeated while saving his country]. I do not know that I have ever, in this world of selfishness and ambition in which I lived, met a mind so void of any thought of public welfare as his. I have seen a crowd of men disturbing the country in order to raise themselves: that is an everyday perversity; but he is the only one who seemed to me always ready to turn the world upside down in order to divert himself. Neither have I ever known a mind less sincere, nor one that had a more thorough contempt for the truth. When I say he despised it, I am wrong: he did not honour it enough to heed it in any way whatever. When speaking or writing, he spoke the truth or lied, without caring which he did, occupied only with the effect he wished to produce at the moment. The Recollections of Alexis de Tocqueville, 125-126.

<sup>46</sup> See letter to Corcelle, September 13, 1844, in OC XV, 192.

<sup>47</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse, (Paris: Editions Garnier Freres, 1952) tome II, 6ème partie, 342.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 340.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 361.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 345.

---

<sup>51</sup> One finds no less than sixty-three references to Rousseau in Chateaubriand's Essai sur les révolutions and Génie du Christianisme, which taken on the whole clearly show his ambivalent feelings toward the hero of his youth as shown by the following examples. In the Introduction to the first part of the Essai, he admits that his first writings bear witness that he nourished himself on the works of Rousseau inasmuch as he reproduced the flaws of his model. In chapter III he states: "[d]espite the admiration that I professed then for J. J. Rousseau, I fought vigorously the system of his Social Contract, and the reader will see shortly that this brought me to repudiate the republics in favor of the constitutional monarchy."

In Chapter XXIV, he reproaches Rousseau the pride that causes him to treat with familiarity the Prussian king, Frederic, in his famous letter, October 30, 1762, to this king. Further in the same chapter, he adds a long footnote in which he provides a scathing analysis of the works as well as the character of Rousseau. "I re-read the works of Rousseau, in order to see if they would justify, in the tribunal of my mature reason and my developed taste, the enthusiasm with which he inspired me in my youth. I did not find again the sublime in the Emile... One senses in the Emile more the ill humor of the misanthrope than the austerity of sage: society is judged by a wounded amour-propre... Rousseau is not definitively above other writers than only in about sixty letters of La Nouvelle Eloise, in his Reveries and in his Confessions. ... Rousseau is more poetic in his depictions than in his affections; his inspiration comes more from the senses than from the soul; he has little of the divine flame of Fénélon; he expresses deep feelings, rarely lofty sentiments: his genius is of a great beauty, but it is more attached to earth

---

than heaven... I don't reproach myself my enthusiasm for the works of Rousseau; I keep in part my first admiration, and I know now on what it is founded. But if I had to admire the writer, how could I have excused the man? How was I not revolted by the Confessions on the basis of the facts? Rousseau believed he could dispose of the reputation of his benefactress! Rousseau did not fear to make immortal the dishonor of Madame de Warrens..."

In part II, chapter XXVI of the Essai, Chateaubriand exclaims: "[b]ut what force of genius in Rousseau, to have at the same time predict the revolution and its crimes [in the Emile]? and what unbelievable circumstance, that these same writings served to bring them to fruition."

He returns to the subject of Rousseau's influence on the revolution in chapter XLIII. "As for the Social Contract, since a part of it is found in the Emile, we know that it is after all an extract of a greater work that he throws out and concludes nothing; I believe that in its actual state of imperfection, it has done little good and much evil."

In part II, book III, chapter VIII of the Génie du Christianisme, Chateaubriand defends the passion to which Christianity gives rise and which has been qualified as fanaticism by adducing the comparative advantage Rousseau gives to fanaticism over irreligion in the Emile. In part III, book IV, chapter V, he asserts: "Rousseau is one of the writers of the eighteen century whose style has the most charm, because this man, bizarre by intention, had at least created for himself a shadow of religion. He had faith in something that was not Christ, but which nevertheless was the Scriptures; this phantom of Christianity, as such, has sometimes given much grace to his genius. He who raised himself with such strength against the sophists, would he not have done better to abandon himself to the



---

tenderness of his soul, than to lose himself, like them, in systems, which he has done nothing but rejuvenate old errors.” Francois Auguste-René de Chateaubriand, Vicomte, Essai sur les révolutions. Génie du Christianisme, texte établi, présenté et annoté par Maurice Regard, Bibliothèque de La Pléiade, (Paris : Editions Gallimard, 1978), 42, 59, 126-127, 366, 400, 707 & 869.

<sup>52</sup> In section VIII of the defense of the Génie du Christianisme, which previously included René, Chateaubriand provides the following clarification about his intention. “Everything that an impartial critic, who wants to enter into the spirit of the work, had the right to demand from the author, is that the episodes of this work would have the visible effect of making religion loved and its utility shown. Now, the necessity of the cloisters for certain misfortunes of life and those, even which are the greatest, that the power of a religion alone can close the wounds that all the balms of the earth would not know how to heal, are they not invincibly proven in the story of René. The author fights besides the particular failings of the young people of the century, the failing that leads directly to suicide. It is J.- J. Rousseau who introduced the first among us these reveries so disastrous and so reprehensible. In isolating himself from men, in abandoning himself to his dreams, he has led a crowd of young people to believe that it is beautiful to throw oneself in the wave of life. The romance of Werther has developed since the germ of this poison. The author of the Génie du Christianisme, feeling obliged to enter in the context of his apology some pictures for the imagination, has wanted to denounce this kind of new vice, and paint the fatal consequences of an exaggerated love of solitude.” Ibid, 1102-1103.

---

<sup>53</sup> Francois Auguste-René de Chateaubriand, Vicomte, Atala, René, Le dernier abencerage, intro. Emile Faguet, (Paris: Nelson, Editeurs, 1939), 145.

<sup>54</sup> Alphonse Marie Louis de Lamartine, Marquis, Jocelyn in Oeuvres poétiques complètes, texte établi, annoté et présenté par Marius-Francois Guyard, Bibliothèque de La Pléiade, (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1963), 3ème époque, September 20, 1793, 623.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 9ème époque, November 9, 1800, 738.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 2ème époque, February 28, 1793.

<sup>57</sup> Pascal explains the origin of this conflict in a letter written October 17, 1651 to his sister Madame Périer and her husband. In this letter, he meditates on the consolation provided by Christianity to cope with the death of someone dear, in this case that of their father. “God created man with two loves, one for God, the other for oneself; but with this law, that love for God would be infinite, that is, without no other end than God himself, and that the love for oneself would be finite and relating to God. Man in this state not only loved himself without sin, but he could not have loved himself except without sin. Since then, sin having arrived, man has lost the first of these loves; and love for oneself having remained alone in this great soul capable of an infinite love, this *amour-propre* extended itself and spilled over in the emptiness that love of God left; and thus it has loved itself alone, and everything for itself, that is, infinitely. There is the origin of *amour-propre*. It was natural to Adam, and just in his innocence; but it became both criminal and immoderate, following his sin. There is the source of this love, and the cause of its defectiveness and of its excess... The horror of death was natural to Adam innocent, because his life being very agreeable to God, it must have been agreeable to man: and death was horrible, when it ended a life in conformity with the will of God.

---

Since then, man having sinned, his life has become corrupted, his body and his soul enemies one of the other, and both of God. This horrible change having infected a life so saintly, the love of life remained nonetheless: and the horror of death having remained the same, what was just in Adam is unjust and criminal in us. There is the origin of the horror of death, and the cause of its defectiveness. Let us enlighten then the error of nature by the light of faith.” Blaise Pascal, Oeuvres complètes, texte établi et annoté par Jacques Chevalier, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), 496-497.

<sup>58</sup> Pensées, nos. 458 & 461, 191-192.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., see no. 485, 197.

<sup>60</sup> Pascal wrote these series of letters, nineteen altogether followed by four legal briefs addressed to the ecclesiastical judges and members of Parliament, to defend the Jansenist position against that of the Jesuit on the theological question of grace, a subject he abandoned after the third letter to focus instead directly on challenging his opponents on questions of morality and most importantly that of responsibility. The seventeenth century Jansenist-Jesuit quarrel has its origin in Pelagius’ denial of the necessity of grace, which was refuted by Saint Augustin causing the Pelagians to be condemned by Rome in 418, 529 and many times later, notably at the Council of Trent. Pelagius’ heresy consisted in the following: his belief in personal responsibility, in human ability to avoid sin and evil by free choice and assertion that a Christian is defined by his moral standards and not by baptism. His doctrine appeared dangerous to the Church due to its claim that the holiness of the Church depends on the Christian virtues of its members. The Church feared that such a claim would leave it incapable of fulfilling its mission to spread Christianity around the world.

---

The Jansenists who considered themselves the heirs of Saint Augustine found themselves in the heretical position of the Pelagians of the early Christian era whose doctrine was revived in seventeenth century France by the Jesuit followers of Luis de Molina who published in 1588 a semi-Pelagian doctrine on grace titled *Concordia liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis etc.* On May 31, 1653 Pope Innocent X issued the bull *Cum Occasione* condemning five propositions attributed to Cornelius Jansenius in his magnum opus titled *Augustinus*, a long theological treatise derived from Augustine's theology and doctrine of predestination. Jansenius' treatise is divided into three volumes: the first deals with the Pelagian heresy; the second deals with the grace given to the first couple in Paradise and the state of fallen nature; and the third with the "grace of Christ the Savior." The seventeenth century quarrel in which Pascal took part focused on whether man can be in a state of grace and free at the same time. Jansenism asserts that grace works infallibly within God's purpose and therefore man cannot be both free and in a state of grace. In effect, Jansenism puts in peril human liberty. Pascal, *Oeuvres complètes*, 659-661 & 905.

According to Leszek Kolakowski, the condemnation of Jansenius' doctrine by the Church in effect constituted an implicit refutation of Augustine's teaching, "its own greatest theological authority." In fact, Kolakowski goes on to argue that the ascendance of Jesuit doctrine in seventeenth century France ushered the de-Augustination of the Roman Catholic Church in that country. This movement was aimed at finding a middle ground for the Church to adjust to the new emerging civilization brought about by Cartesianism. The upper classes of French society were no longer disposed to submit to the discipline and deadly seriousness of the Augustinian doctrine of predestination, which essentially

---

denies the power of human liberty and teaches that the only path to salvation is a life of penance. It was a time in which *amour-propre* and curiosity flourished and the educated classes asserted their freedom of inquiry, all warnings and censures notwithstanding. The upper classes and the royal court refused to subject themselves to the “moral stringency and inflexibility” of the Augustinian Jansenists who proclaimed “that curiosity is a dreadful sin, that theatre is a diabolic contrivance, that flirting with one’s neighbor’s wife is irrevocably a straight path to eternal fire, and that one ought to give one’s belongings, apart from the bare necessities, to the poor.”

The Jesuits recognized that Augustinian orthodoxy was no longer suited to the times and that the Church risked losing its following among the upper classes if it continued to impose its strict standards. Together they constituted an odd mix of “laxists” as well as rigid moralists and confessors-- a fact recognized by Pascal in the fifth *Lettre Provinciale* - who produced a variety of manuals to be used in different social circumstances to attract and retain a following. Kolakowski maintains that their followers were not atheists or libertines but rather the nobility. They were by strict Christian standards people of questionable morals who nonetheless wanted to believe that there must be a less strenuous and less exhausting method of eternal salvation than the Augustinian Jansenists would suggest. Hence, the “easy devotion” the Jesuits implemented “was a way to keep them [the nobility] in the Church and under the Church’s partial control (especially in matters concerning the education of the young) and ultimately to lead them to God, who is really merciful-- that is to say lenient-- and understands human weakness. The Jesuits in a sense believed in the power of grace more than the Augustinians did: to be sure it is up to us and our free will to make grace efficient, but it is not a very

---

laborious task precisely because God is so lavish in distributing his gifts, and nobody is left helpless by him, whereas in Augustinian doctrine he distributes his grace sparingly and according to quite incomprehensible rules.”

Kolakowski likens the reactionary position of the mid-seventeenth century Jansenists, who considered themselves the faithful carriers of the genuine Christian tradition, to that articulated by contemporary fundamentalist Christians. Unlike the more Christian humanism of the Jesuits whose belief in free will suited the natural theoretical disposition of the educated classes, the Jansenist doctrine of predestination appealed more to those whose existence was confined within the narrow limits of a lifelong, monotonous, unchanging toil, like the existence of medieval peasants and artisans.” Leszek Kolakowski, God Owes Us Nothing, A Brief Remark on Pascal’s Religion and on the Spirit of Jansenism, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 4-59 passim.

<sup>61</sup> Pascal exposes in the fifth *Lettres Provinciales* that the Jesuit-Molinist doctrine on grace, which Augustinian-Jansenism condemned as unorthodox, is driven by mundane considerations that have fatal consequences for morality. “Know that their object is not to corrupt mores: it is not their intention. But they also do not have for their unique goal to reform them: that would be a bad politic. Here is what their thought reveals. They have enough good opinion of themselves to believe it is useful and somewhat necessary to the good of religion that their credit extends itself everywhere, and that they rule all the consciences. And because the biblical and stern maxims are proper for governing some types of persons, they use these in occasion where they are favorable to them. But since these same maxims do not harmonize with the intention of most people, they omit them in the case of these, in order to have something to satisfy everybody. It is for this reason

---

that having to deal with person of all sorts of conditions and of such different nations, it is necessary that they have the assorted casuists for all this diversity. From this principle you judge easily that if they had only lax casuists, they would ruin their principal scheme, which is to embrace everybody, since those who are truly pious look for a stricter spiritual adviser. But as there are not many of this sort, they do not need many strict advisers to guide them. They have a few for a few; while the crowd of the lax casuists offer themselves to the crowd of those who are looking for laxity. It is by this obliging and accommodating conduct, as Father Petau calls it, that they extend their arms to everybody: for, if someone presents himself to them who is well resolved to return ill-gotten goods, do not fear that they will deter him from doing it; they will praise and confirm, on the contrary, such a holy resolution: but comes another who wants to have absolution without making restitution, the thing will be very difficult, if they do not furnish the means by which they will make themselves the guarantors. That way they preserve all their friends, and defend themselves against their enemies; for, if one reproaches them their extreme laxity, they produce forthwith to the public their strict advisors, with some books they have written about the severity of the law of Christianity; and the simple-minded, and those who do not go to the depth of things, are happy with these proofs. Thus, they have proofs for all sorts of people, and answer so well according to what is asked of them, that when they find themselves in the countries where a crucified God passes for folly, they abolish the scandal of the cross, and preach only Jesus Christ glorious, and not Jesus Christ suffering: as they have done in India and in China, where they have permitted even idolatry to Christians, by this subtle invention, of making them hide under their clothes an image of Jesus Christ, to which they teach them

---

to report mentally the public adorations they make to the idol Chacim-coan and to their Keum-facum, as Gravina the Dominican reproaches them... Here is the manner in which they have scattered themselves all over the world thanks to *the doctrine of the probable opinions*, which is the source and the foundation of all this dissoluteness. That is what you must learn from them. For they do not hide it from anyone, not even all what you have just heard, with only this difference that they cover their human and political prudence with the pretext of a divine and Christian prudence; as if faith, and the tradition that maintains it, was not always one and invariable in all the ages and in all places; as if it were for the rule to bend to accommodate the subject who must conform to it; and as if the souls had only to corrupt the law of the Lord to purify themselves of their stains; instead that the *law of the Lord, which is without stain and all holy*, must be the one which converts the souls, and conform them to its salutary instructions. Go then, I beg you to see these good fathers, and I am certain that you will easily see, in the laxity of their morality, the cause of their doctrine on grace..." Pascal, *Oeuvres complètes*, 704-706.

<sup>62</sup> In this work Pascal examines the controversy over predestination that was vigorously debated among Calvinists, Molinists and Jansenists in mid-seventeenth century France. The three parties disputed among themselves whether man achieves salvation solely by the will of God or whether he plays an active role in this process. The Calvinists maintained that since God created man with the intent to save some and damn others then man has nothing to do with his salvation, which depends entirely on the will of God. The Molinists responded to this abominable opinion by taking the totally contrary position, which is that God conditionally wants to save all men and His will to do so is made



---

evident by the incarnation of Jesus Christ to redeem them. For the Molinists then the will of man and not that of God plays an active role in his salvation. Pascal sided with the Jansenists who maintained that both these opinions are erroneous and contrary to Catholic theology, which is founded on Saint Augustine's doctrine on grace. His *Ecrits Sur La Grace* outline his position, which he presents as a middle point between the two extremes of Calvinism and Molinism. He condemns their heresy, which he refutes with the following arguments.

According to the disciples of Saint Augustine there are two states of human nature: the first nature is the one created in Adam, which coming from the hand of God was pure, without stain, just and upright; the other is the state in which it has been reduced by sin and the rebellion of the first man. This second nature is soiled with sin, abominable and detestable in the eyes of God. In the first case where man was in a state of innocence God in his justice showed a general and conditional will to save all men as long as they wanted it by their free will aided by the sufficient grace He gave them for their salvation. But since Adam by his free will misused this grace-- his rebellion against God stemming from a movement of his will and without any impulsion from God-- he corrupted the entire human race, which shares with him God's anger. Nevertheless, the disciples of Saint Augustine believe that God separated the human race into one party He wanted to save by an absolute will founded on His mercy while leaving the other in the damnation where it was and where He could have left all men justifiably since all equally participate in the original sin and are entirely worthy of damnation. Thus, God sent Jesus Christ to save absolutely and by very effective means those he had chosen and predestined from the whole mass who are the only ones he wanted absolutely to merit salvation after His

---

death. God did not show a similar will for the salvation of the others who He did not deliver from the universal and just damnation in which He left them. Nevertheless, a few of those who are not predestined are still called to participate in the good reserved for the selected few and thus to participate in the Redemption of Jesus Christ. It is up to these people to persevere and they could do so if they wanted but being exempt from the number of those selected God does not give them the effective grace without which they never want to persevere. Consequently, there are three sort of men: those who never come to faith; the others who come to it and who not persevering die in mortal sin; and the last who come to faith and persevere in it in charity until death. Jesus never had an absolute will that the first receive any grace by His death since they have not in effect received any. He wanted to redeem the second and gave them the grace that could have led them to salvation if they will to use it, but He did not want to give them that particular grace of perseverance without which one never uses well the grace. But for the last ones, Jesus Christ wanted absolutely their salvation and led them to it by certain and infallible means. Therefore, the disciples of Saint Augustine maintain that all men are obliged to believe with a belief mixed with fear. This belief should keep them from holding with certitude that they belong to this small number of the elected that Jesus Christ wants to save. It should also keep them from ever judging that any of the men who live in this world, no matter how wicked and impious, are not of the number of the predestined, for as long as they have a moment of life it should be left to the impenetrable secret of God the discernment of the elected from that of the damned. This then obliges all men to do for the wicked and impious that which can contribute to their salvation. In sum, the opinions of the disciples of Saint Augustine show that God has an absolute will to save

---

those who are saved and a conditional will and by prediction to condemn the damned; and that salvation comes from the will of God and damnation from the will of men. Ibid., 951-954.

<sup>63</sup> Pascal aims to combat the free-thinking of his time with an apology for Christianity that frames a path to salvation for man by appealing to the interest he has in persevering in faith. He argues in the *Pensées* that since no one knows for sure whether the soul is mortal or immortal it is in man's interest to bet on the existence of the Christian God to overcome the misery of the human condition. If the soul is immortal and one has lived the Christian way he will have the satisfaction of finding out that he was right and if not he will not be disappointed since in that case there is no experience beyond death. Therefore, Pascal proposes that it is rational for man to bet on the existence of God because if he is right he wins and if he is wrong he loses nothing. Alternatively, the atheist who rejects the Christian God because he believes the material world is all there is will not only be deprived of the satisfaction of knowing that he is right but will also have to face the terrible consequences of the judgment anticipated by Christian theology if he is wrong. Thus, it is a win and no-lose situation for the believer and a no-lose and lost one for the atheist.

"I had spent a long time in the study of the abstract sciences; and the little communication that one can have in them disgusted me with them. When I began the study of man, I saw that these abstract sciences are not suitable to man, and that I was losing sight of my condition more by penetrating in them than others by ignoring them... But I believed I found at least many companions in the study of man and that it is the true study suitable to him. I was wrong; there are even less who study it than geometry. It is only for lack

---

of knowing how to study that one looks for the rest... Only one thought occupies us, we cannot think of two things at the same time; about which good takes us according to the world, not according to God. Man is visibly made to think; it is all his dignity and all his merit, and all his duty is to think as he should. Now the order of thought is to start with the self, and of one's author and one's end. Now, of what does the world think? Never of that; but to dance, to play the lute, to sing, to make verses, to chase the ring, etc., to fight, to make oneself king, without thinking of what it is to be king, and to be man."

Pascal, *Pensées*, nos. 144-146, 115-116

"Before I enter into the proofs of the Christian religion, I find it necessary to depict the injustice of men who live in the indifference of looking for the truth of the one thing that is important to them, and that touches them so closely. Of all their straying, it is without doubt the one that most proves them guilty of their folly and blindness, and in which it is the easiest to confuse them by the first sights of common sense and by the natural sentiments. For it is indubitable that the time of this life is not but an instant, that the state of death is eternal, of whatever nature it might be, and that thus all our actions and our thoughts must take paths so different depending on the state of this eternity, that it is impossible to approach it with a sense and judgment other than that which settles it from this perspective, which must be our last object. There is nothing more visible than that and thus, following the principles of reason, the conduct of men is entirely unreasonable, if they take another path. Let us then judge on that point those who live without reflecting upon this last end of life, who let themselves follow their inclinations and their pleasures without reflection and anxiety, and, as if they could annihilate eternity by turning their thought away from it, think only of making themselves happy in this

---

moment alone. Nevertheless, this eternity subsist, and death, which must open it and which threatens them at every hour, must place them inevitably in a short time in the horrible necessity of being eternally either annihilated or unfortunate, without knowing which of these eternities is forever prepared for them. There [is] a doubt of a terrible consequence. They are in peril of an eternity of miseries; and on that, as if the thing was not worth the trouble, they neglect to examine if it is of these opinions that the masses receive with a too credulous facility, or of those which, being obscure in themselves, have a very solid foundation, although hidden. Thus, they do not know if there is truth or error in the thing, or if there is force or weakness in the proofs. They have them before their eyes; they refuse to look at them, and in this ignorance they take the side of doing all there needs to be to fall in this misfortune in the case that it is, to wait to meet the challenge in death, being nonetheless very satisfied in this state, to make profession and finally vanity of it. Can one think seriously of the importance of this matter without being horrified by such an extravagant conduct?" Ibid., no. 195, 129.

"The immortality of the soul is a thing that matters to us so strongly, that touches us so profoundly, that one has to have lost all sentiment to be in the indifference to know that which it is... Thus our first interest and our first duty is to enlighten ourselves on this subject, on which depends all our conduct...Nothing betrays more an extreme weakness of mind than not to know what is the misfortune of man without God; nothing marks more a bad disposition of the heart than not to hope for the truth of the eternal promises; nothing is more cowardly than to put on a bold front against God...[T]here are but two kinds of persons that one can call reasonable: either those who serve God with all their

---

heart because they know Him, or those who look for Him with all their heart because they don't know Him." Ibid., no 194, 124 & 128.

<sup>64</sup> Pascal's untimely death prevented him from completing this work, which remains a series of notes copied and edited for publication by a committee constituted in October 1668 for that purpose by his friends and his sister, Gilberte Périer. This edition known as the Port Royal edition appeared in 1669. It was authoritative for over a century until Victor Cousin proposed in 1842 the necessity to publish a new edition founded on the careful study of Pascal's handwritten manuscript, which according to his nephew Etienne Périer consisted of the small pieces of paper on which Pascal's wrote his thoughts and classified them in folders. Pascal, Oeuvres complètes., 1081-1083.

<sup>65</sup> Pensées, nos. 346 & 347, 162-163.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., no. 430, 179-180.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., nos. 357 & 358, 164.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., no. 556, 217.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., no. 279, 147.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., no. 194, 123.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., nos. 277 & 278, 146-147.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., no. 89, 100.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., no. 252, 143.

<sup>74</sup> DA, II, 1, 10, 435/554.

<sup>75</sup> DA, II, 2, 15, 519/658.

<sup>76</sup> DA, II, 2, 12, 510/647.

<sup>77</sup> DA, II, 2, 11, 508/645.

---

<sup>78</sup> Letter to Arthur de Gobineau, September 5, 1843, in OC IX, 46. See also “The European Revolution & Correspondence with Gobineau, 192.

<sup>79</sup> See *Notes et Variantes* to page 661 in Oeuvres II, De la démocratie en Amérique II, 1127.

<sup>80</sup> DA, II, 2, 16, 522/662.

<sup>81</sup> See *Notes et Variantes* to page 646 in Oeuvres II, De la démocratie en Amérique II, 1124.

<sup>82</sup> Letter, August 4, 1857, in OC XIII, 327-328.

<sup>83</sup> DA, I, 2, 10, 359/434.

<sup>84</sup> See *Notes et Variantes* to page 434 in Oeuvres II, De la démocratie en Amérique I, 1035.

<sup>85</sup> See *Notes et Variantes* to page 638 in Oeuvres II, De la démocratie en Amérique II, 1121.

<sup>86</sup> Rousseau, Emile, bk. 4, 313.

<sup>87</sup> See *Notes et Variantes* to page 640 in Oeuvres II, De la démocratie en Amérique II, 1121-1122.

<sup>88</sup> Rousseau, Emile, bk. 1, 54.

<sup>89</sup> DA, II, 2, 16, 522/661-662.

<sup>90</sup> The Spirit of the Laws, pt. 3, bk. 19, chaps. 10 & 11, 313-314.

<sup>91</sup> DA, II, 3, 19, 604/765.

<sup>92</sup> Letter to Kergolay, December 15, 1850, in OC XIII, 229-233 *passim*.

<sup>93</sup> Letter to Kergolay, October 25, 1842, in OC XIII, 106.

<sup>94</sup> Letter to Corcelle, June 18, 1856, in OC XV, 162.

<sup>95</sup> DA, II, 2, 17, 524/665.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

This dissertation began by inquiring into the disparate intellectual traditions that influence Tocqueville's religious teaching to explain its apparent ambiguity. It showed the mutual dependence of religion and liberty in Tocqueville's thought before proceeding to outline his admiration for the Americans whose ordered lives in the chaotic world of democracy he attributes to their enlightenment and the prominence of religion in their mores. It then unraveled the way in which Tocqueville reconciles the claim of the enlightenment that all opinions are suspect until subjected to the scrutiny of individual reason with the irrationality of belief in revealed religion. It relied heavily on Tocqueville's correspondence and a comparative reading of his works with those of his three mentors to disentangle the complex principles of the new political science he outlines for the age of equality in Democracy in America. This methodology led to the identification of the constitutive elements of his religious doctrine, which carefully combines selected features of the enlightenment with those of Christianity in a way that is consistent with the democratic inclination to focus solely on the material world while at the same time it seeks to moderate it.

Up until this point, this study has tried to answer the question: what is the essence of Tocqueville's religious doctrine? To fulfill that objective it examined the influence of Montesquieu, Rousseau and Pascal on Tocqueville's teaching to show that it has two components: provide order in the otherwise disordered democratic state; and satisfy a primordial human need for the eternal. Given Tocqueville's affirmation that only a



modified Christianity can sustain human dignity and liberty under a system of equality insofar as it fulfills these two requirements it might be appropriate to ask at this juncture whether his teaching has universal applicability. Put another way, it might be useful to ask whether countries that do not share the philosophic and religious traditions that inform Tocqueville's teaching can successfully establish and maintain democratic freedom. The connection Tocqueville makes among Christianity, the enlightenment and democratic freedom makes it reasonable to wonder about the viability of any endeavor to impose American-style democracy on non-Western and non-Christian societies. While it is beyond the scope of this study to answer this question it is worthwhile to raise it since after all Tocqueville supports his thesis with the following claim.

Next to each religion is a political opinion that is joined to it by affinity. Allow the human mind to follow its tendency and it will regulate political society and the divine city in a uniform manner... The greatest part of English America has been peopled by men who...brought to the New World a Christianity that I cannot depict better than to call it democratic and republican...<sup>1</sup>

Tocqueville is unequivocal that only a modified Christianity can regulate the dangerous democratic instinct for individual independence, which left unrestrained causes man to become amoral and apolitical. Christianity's teaching on the equal freedom of all men before God coincides with the democratic passion for equality while at the same time it imposes on men moral obligations to God and to each other to produce order. Moreover, Tocqueville ranks Christianity highest among all other religions because it alone possesses a universal quality that transcends place and time. Unlike

other religions, which are applicable only to certain countries, certain mores, a social state or a particular nation, it embraces all humankind. In fact, this universal quality constitutes for him the greatest indicator of Christianity's divine origin.

Nevertheless, Tocqueville's painstaking analysis of democracy is based on two homogeneous nineteenth century societies: Protestant America and traditionally Catholic France, which embraced secularism after the Revolution. In the first, he finds the harmonious coexistence of religion and democratic liberty whereas in the second where religion is reviled liberty is conspicuously absent. In the first volume of Democracy in America, which focuses on the benefit of religion to society rather than the individual, Tocqueville attributes the cause for this disparity to the separation of church and state that reigns in America. One has to consult L'Ancien régime et la révolution for Tocqueville's in-depth analysis of the way in which the intermingling of politics and religion in France undermined religion. Suffice it to say here that in France religion, which was closely associated with the *ancien régime*, shared the latter's fortune when it was toppled by the Revolution with dire consequences for liberty.<sup>2</sup> All the same, Tocqueville's unique perspective in Democracy in America provides an excellent starting point from which to examine the long-term ramification of the movement toward greater secularism that afflicts contemporary American society insofar as it illuminates the danger to liberty it portends provided the right questions are asked.

Has not secularism's ostensible concern for religious freedom produced the fundamentalist reaction that is increasingly attempting to merge religion and politics thereby creating the danger to democratic liberty Tocqueville warns us about?<sup>3</sup> Would not a secularist position that concedes religion benefits society serve more effectively to

counteract the radicalism that characterizes the fundamentalist movement and thus serve better the cause of freedom? By framing the questions in this manner it becomes possible to envisage a new way to talk about a polarizing issue in the hope of guiding America toward the former prudence that in Tocqueville's view is the hallmark of her liberty.

One way to do so is to begin from the standpoint that Tocqueville's new political science wants to redirect the enlightenment project to its roots in Christianity, which he credits for the civilization of the entire Western world. Viewed from this perspective his teaching provides an alternative approach from which to ponder contemporary moral issues such as: the contentious debate on the separation of church and state<sup>4</sup> in which the support of the liberal media for the secularist position serves to radicalize the conservative movement;<sup>5</sup> and the controversial issues of late-term abortion and same-sex marriage.<sup>6</sup> These subjects are politically divisive partly because contemporary society is bereft of a moral authority from which to evaluate ever-expanding rights claims inasmuch as public opinion is manipulated by a media that is more committed to secularist than conservative values, the first of which are associated with the rationalism of the enlightenment and the second with religion.

Religion, which began to lose its force with the advent of radical feminism in the 1960's, is now under greater attack the more it is associated with the growing political influence of the fundamentalist Christians. This trend entrenches the secularists in their position that moral choice should be dictated by individual reason and the fundamentalists in the fanaticism that defines their religious zeal. Tocqueville's teaching, which affirms the utility of religion to society, especially in democratic republics, makes evident that the establishment of moral standards is beyond the sole competence of

human reason and thus cannot be left to individual choice particularly in the transient world of democracy where the absence of old laws and traditions make the moral authority of religion a necessity.

The philosophers of the eighteenth century explained the gradual weakening of beliefs in an altogether simple fashion. Religious zeal, they said, will be extinguished as freedom and enlightenment increase. It is unfortunate that the facts do not accord with this theory.

There is a certain European population whose disbelief is equaled only by their brutishness and ignorance; whereas in America one sees one of the freest and most enlightened peoples of the world eagerly fulfill all the external duties of religion.

On my arrival in the United States it was the religious aspect of the country that struck my eye. As I prolonged my stay, I perceived the great political consequences that flowed from these new facts.<sup>7</sup>

If Tocqueville were to take part in the contemporary debate on the separation of church and state fueled by the school prayer, and Pledge of Allegiance controversies, and the contentious moral issues of abortion, sex education, and homosexual marriage, *inter alia*, he would agree neither with the secularist nor the fundamentalist interpretation of the First Amendment to the Constitution. By making individual reason the sole arbiter of morality the first discounts the need for a uniform moral law attributed to divine authority to guide man in democracy, where all the resources of the intellect are focused on the pursuit of material well-being. The second goes to the other extreme by advocating a conception of moral law that borders on intolerance and fanaticism. Tocqueville who

painstakingly tries to show that “American liberty was born in the bosom of religion and is still supported in its arms”<sup>8</sup> would no doubt challenge these ideological readings, each of which threatens liberty by embracing an extreme materialism and spiritualism respectively.

Tocqueville for whom the American founding is situated in the Puritan establishment of the New England states found that religion continued to thrive at the time of his visit in 1831, forty-two years after the ratification of the Constitution. In fact, he attributes this fortunate circumstance to the following reasons: the Puritan founding is largely responsible for the pervasiveness of religion in all American habits and sentiments; and the great strength of religion comes from the separation of church and state mandated by the Constitution. Nevertheless, it is safe to assume from his praise of the force of religion in American life that he would not read into the Establishment clause the need for a complete public disavowal of the non-sectarian piety articulated by the founding fathers in the Declaration of Independence. He would probably agree with the view of a prominent constitutional scholar who maintains that the founders intended that the broad language of the Constitution would be illuminated by the moral vision outlined in the principles of the Declaration of Independence.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Tocqueville would undoubtedly argue that an interpretation of the First amendment should take into consideration the moral reasoning that is the basis of the Declaration, which makes reference to “Nature’s God,” “the Supreme Judge of the World,” and “the Protection of divine Providence.”<sup>10</sup>

Still, rather than enter upon the controversial moral issues that confront American society today, let it be sufficient here to recapitulate Tocqueville's perception of the limits of reason and the utility of religion in democratic republics. As noted elsewhere in this study Tocqueville's analysis of democracy is very clear that liberty in America is owed to the dominant status religion enjoys in this country and its absence in France is attributable to the preeminence of secularism. American freedom subsists in the chaos of democracy because it originated in the harmonious combination of the practical application of the rationality of the enlightenment with the Christian mores that permeates all aspects of social life. The numerous Christian sects he found in America did not produce the doubt and intolerance commonly associated with sectarianism because they shared uniform Christian moral values. Moreover, public opinion reflected the pervasiveness of Christian ethical principles in American social mores and compelled conformity to them. In contrast, French democracy succumbed time and again to despotism because the enlightenment project, which was disseminated by the French Revolution, came to be identified with secularism after the Revolution. Tocqueville's teaching adumbrates that once the progress of equality facilitated the vulgarization of the enlightenment's proclamation that reason is the sole arbiter of truth it became obvious that the commonplace realities of the new social order made reason alone an unreliable guide for morality.

Several considerations underpin Tocqueville's call for a new political science to enable men to live if not virtuous but at least ordered lives. Collectively, these considerations support the leitmotif of his commentary, viz., equality imposes such drastic changes in the ideas and sentiments of man that it makes it all the more urgent to

bring the humanitarian principles of the enlightenment into harmony with Christian moral precepts. Put another way, the enlightenment that ushered the age of equality subjects everything to human reason but democracy, which subjects everything to its ever-changing laws, needs something outside of its dominion to regulate it and that something is religion.

First among the considerations that support Tocqueville's religious teaching is the notion that equality has eliminated the possibility of leisure, which enabled man under aristocracy to abandon himself to the contemplation associated with the philosophic life. Thus, Tocqueville implies that aristocratic inequality made it possible for the men of his caste to appeal to reason to validate their beliefs, a luxury unavailable to the democratic crowd. Put another way, reasoned opinion can no longer be a viable path to virtue in democracy inasmuch as equality imposes intellectual constraint on the individual compelling him to rely on a source outside himself for moral guidance, which is common opinion. If democratic opinions are to have a moral content they must be founded on the beliefs inspired by the code of ethics and moral principles taught by Christianity from which the humanitarian ideas of the enlightenment are derived. In effect, Tocqueville wants to refocus the discourse of modern morality generated by the humanitarian principles of the enlightenment from its emphasis on rights to the obligations Christianity insists that equality before God imposes on all men. Evidence of his irrevocable posture on this matter is found in the polemic on morality that was the subject of his 1843 correspondence with Gobineau.

Tocqueville and Gobineau begun corresponding that year when Tocqueville considered enlisting the collaboration of the young Gobineau in a work which he

tentatively undertook for the *Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques*. It was to be the study of the new moral concepts and social habits developing in Europe during the dissolution of the old aristocratic order and the new progressing democracy. Tocqueville sought to discover the distinctive features of the “new” moral doctrines to determine their consequences. There ensued an epistolary conversation between the two men in which their disagreement about the influence of Christianity on the humanitarian ideas of the enlightenment illuminates Tocqueville’s convictions.

Gobineau argues that the enlightenment produced, *inter alia*, an innovation in the area of human welfare that “very favorably proves the progressive nature of morality.”<sup>11</sup> For example, he maintains that modern morality changed the Christian maxim that man is condemned to work from a painful duty into an equal right to work. Tocqueville reproves him for his inability to see that the innovations he considers morally superior to the principles of Christianity are merely new applications of its principles in a different social state. In fact, Tocqueville’s posture throughout this exchange reflects his conviction that the enlightenment project’s emphasis on progress caused it to repudiate the core beliefs of Christianity with the result that there has been since its inception a general lowering of moral standards. He adduces modern morality’s glorification of the flesh, which is directly opposed to the Christian concept of the “open struggle of the spirit over the ruling flesh,” as “the natural and logical consequences of a weakened religious faith and of widespread doubt about the existence of the other world.”<sup>12</sup> He enjoins Gobineau to proceed with the assignment by starting from the premise that “Christianity is the great source of modern morality.”<sup>13</sup>



Second, Tocqueville chooses to model his religious doctrine partially on the teaching of Rousseau-- who rescues man from the debasement into which the egalitarian discourse of modernity plunged him by re-introducing him to the moral appeal of classical political philosophy-- and partially on Pascal's apology for Christianity to moderate the spurious effect of equality on liberty. He supports his advocacy for meshing the philosophy of the enlightenment with Christian morality by affirming that this combination conforms to "the natural state of men in the matter of religion"<sup>14</sup> in democratic republics. Thus, one might say that Tocqueville's democratic theory aims to bridge the gap between the rights' discourse of the enlightenment that animates the democratic social order and the equal moral obligations Christianity imposes on all men.

There lies behind Tocqueville's enthusiasm for the enlightenment the more sober realization that in promising more than it could deliver it wearied the human spirit. Tocqueville admires the Americans for putting into practice the teachings of the enlightenment without any knowledge of its theories while he remains distrustful of the excessive taste of the French for general ideas and "blind faith in the goodness and absolute truth of any theory,"<sup>15</sup> especially in matters of government. By the mid-nineteenth century the great lassitude of revolutions that weighed on France causes Tocqueville to question the efficacy of the enlightenment project in one of his many rebukes addressed to Gobineau on the subject of his racist theory. Even though Tocqueville's comments below postdate the first Democracy by eight years, they recall his anxiety about France's prospects for liberty even before he undertook his great work as shown by his letters home from America, some of which have been previously cited in this study.

The last century had an exaggerated and a rather puerile confidence in the power that man exercises over himself and in that of peoples over their own destiny. That was the error of the time; a noble error, after all, which, if it brought about the commission of many follies, led to the accomplishment of some very great things, beside which posterity will find us very small. The fatigue of revolutions, the tedium of emotions, the failure of so many generous ideas and so many vast hopes, all this has now precipitated us in the opposite excess. After having believed ourselves capable of reforming ourselves; after having had an excessive pride, we have fallen into a humility that is no less excessive; we believed ourselves capable of everything, today we believe ourselves capable of nothing, and we like to believe that from now on struggle and effort will be useless and that our blood, our muscles, and our nerves will always be stronger than our will and our virtue.<sup>16</sup>

The idea that modern philosophical discourse, which displaced religion, is partially responsible for the moral bankruptcy of France occupied Tocqueville more than usual in the interval between his retirement from public life following Louis Napoleon's coup d'état of December 1, 1851 and his painstaking preparatory research to began writing in December 1853 *L'Ancien régime et la révolution*. The preparation for this book led him to study the work of Jean Domat (1625-1696), friend of Pascal and most eminent jurist of France in the reign of Louis XIV, whose work provided the justification for the royal absolutism practiced by this king. Domat's work emphasizes duty rather than right as the moral foundation of social order. Tocqueville's comments to Corcelle

on January 1, 1853 on his reading of Domat encapsulate his belief that not only reason but also revelation must be man's guide to morality. "Domat looks at civil laws, their source and their goal in his *Traité des Lois* (Treatise on Law). He has them all emanating from divine laws like reason and revelation indicate, and all working towards the ends that God gave to man. Nothing is greater and simpler than this general view that Christianity alone could provide."<sup>17</sup>

Tocqueville's teaching thus consistently directs posterity to return to the Christian ideas that gave impetus to the humanitarian principles of the enlightenment as a way to reinstate the equal obligations to God and man they impose on all men. He reminds us that an ordered equality can be achieved only through the proper balance of rights with duties. Therefore, in Tocqueville's moral universe a just apportionment of rights must be based on the highest obligation to be fulfilled, which for him is always the preservation of freedom.

### **How Tocqueville's Teaching Belies the Claim that Secularism is Desirable to Protect a Constitutional Right to Religious Freedom**

The previous chapter sought to refute the position of scholars-- most notably that of Sanford Kessler-- who argue that Tocqueville's religious teaching is comparable to Rousseau's civil religion. It relied principally on the arguments for religion Tocqueville makes in the second volume of Democracy in America, which not only shows the natural connection between religion and the human heart but also that of Christianity and democracy, to support its case. Nevertheless, if one focuses primarily on the teaching of the first volume of the Democracy, which emphasizes the utility of religion to society, it might be easy to conclude with Kessler that it bears indeed a strong likeness to

Rousseau's civil religion. In the chapter titled "Indirect Influence that Religious Beliefs Exert on Political Society in the United States" in the first volume, part two, chapter nine Tocqueville avers "[i]f it serves man very much as an individual that his religion be true, this is not so for society. Society has nothing to fear nor to hope from the other life; and what is most important to it is not so much that all citizens profess the true religion but that they profess a religion."<sup>18</sup>

The differentiation Tocqueville makes between the religion of the individual and that of society is important in the context of a discussion on religious freedom in twenty-first century America since Tocqueville-- despite his attachment to Christianity and preference for Catholicism in both volumes of Democracy in America-- looks at religion in this chapter strictly from the political point of view. In that particular chapter Tocqueville wants to persuade his compatriots that religion, especially Catholicism, is not antidemocratic and that religion-- whose association with the absolutism of the monarchy in France produced an ardent secularism-- can be reconciled to liberal principles by following the American example of religious disestablishment. He is convinced that religion is strong in America because it reigns in its own sphere and does not mix with politics.

As shown elsewhere in this study Tocqueville believes that religion alone imposes important restraints on the dangerous passions democracy awakens because it is founded on an immortal interest that does not change and the constancy it provides makes it a powerful ally of liberty inasmuch as it fosters self-government. His commentary in the first volume underscores that the Anglo-Americans of the nineteenth century viewed religious morality as their common interest and made it a patriotic duty to bring religion

to the ever-expanding Western frontier states to prevent their descent into anarchy and thus safeguard the liberty of the republic. It also underlines that since moral conformity was compelled by common opinion it is likely that a certain number of Americans practiced their religion more out of habits than convictions but what is important for Tocqueville is that the result for society was the same inasmuch as their compliance fostered liberty. Likewise, in the second volume Tocqueville hopes to kindle a love of liberty by guiding the individual to faith through an appeal to his self-interest. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to wonder about the endurance of American liberty if religion is undermined by secularism in the final outcome of the debate on the separation of church and state, which paradoxically presents itself more and more as a choice in which secularism is synonymous with freedom and non-sectarian public piety is viewed as an infringement on freedom.

Tocqueville's argument to support religious disestablishment in the first volume of the *Democracy* intones his familiar theme that from the human perspective religion is useful because it alone gives hope to the human heart amid the vicissitudes of life. By giving to man a particular form of hope religion shows itself to be "natural to the human heart as hope itself." This, then, the human quality of religion convinces Tocqueville that "disbelief is an accident [and that] faith alone is the permanent state of humanity." It is a universal quality shared by all religions, which "draw from man himself an element of strength that can never fail them, because it depends on one of the constituent principles of human nature."<sup>19</sup> Thus, Tocqueville implies that secularism is incapable of fulfilling man's highest aspiration inasmuch as it extinguishes for him the light of hope and for this

reason it is particularly dangerous in democracies where everything being in flux religion remains the only fixed point around which man can orient himself.

Tocqueville is far less concerned about the destabilizing effect of schism on faith in democracies than he fears the great danger of indifference provoked by “negative doctrines” that undermine religions without providing anything to fill the void they leave. These doctrines, which affirm the falseness of one religion without replacing it with the truth of another, have the same consequence as secularism inasmuch as they leave men without hope “to follow the doubt that leads them to despair.”<sup>20</sup> Doubt in turn produces the restlessness that endangers social life by eroding its moral foundation. Tocqueville provides some guidelines to overcome this danger so that a favorable common opinion of religion can survive in democracy. He exhorts those who have ceased to believe religion true to continue nonetheless to consider “religious beliefs under a human aspect [and] recognize their empire over mores and their influence on laws.”<sup>21</sup> Likewise, he urges those who continue to believe to feel free to expose their faith for all to see while entreating them to have compassion for the lost of faith of their contemporaries. This compromise in which the unbelievers hide their disbeliefs and the believers expose their faith extinguishes the tendency to indifference by producing a public opinion favorable to religion.

Tocqueville provides a description of the way in which secularism undermined liberty in France that is almost an accurate depiction of the onslaught on freedom it has produced in America today. He identifies there four categories of men: those who no longer believed in Christianity or any other religion; those who were arrested in doubt; those who believed but dared not show it; and a few who had the moral strength to brave

public opinion. The latter carried away by their effort harbored a deep hatred for those who attacked religion in the name of freedom and since they associated the innovations freedom engenders with hostility to religion they despised it in principle. He describes them as men who are at war with their centuries.

A similar situation is seen in America today provoked by the relentless assault of secularism on religion. The secularists whose interpretation of the Establishment clause seems to be less freedom *of* religion than freedom *from* religion challenge the symbols and religious sentiments that have suffused American public life for most of the history of the nation. Their quest to eliminate religion from public life has produced a fundamentalist backlash that will not stop short of trampling on freedom. Meanwhile moderate believers have become more and more timid about exposing their beliefs for fear of being identified with the extremists. The growth of the political power of the fundamentalists under the present administration has produced a negative reaction to religion not unlike the one that caused Tocqueville to exhort France to adopt the American doctrine of separation to protect religion from becoming enmeshed in political passions. Much like in Tocqueville's France, religion today divides men into republicans and democrats, conservatives and liberals, and because it is so closely united to the ideology of these political parties it shares the hatred with which each side views the other.

Tocqueville advocates the separation of church and state not to eliminate religion from public life but to restore it to its youthful energy by exhorting his contemporaries "to allow to faith the use of all the strength it still preserves."<sup>22</sup> He is unequivocal that he fears an alignment of religion and politics, particularly in democracies where power

changes hand continuously and laws reflect changing opinions. He is certain that in these circumstances the fortune of religion will always remain uncertain inasmuch as it is dependent upon the material force of those in power. Thus, he construes separation as the absence of a material partnership between religion and politics and not as a mandate for the abolition of religious symbols and the profession of religious sentiments in the public sphere. He provides an anecdote that illuminates his understanding of the doctrine of the separation of church and state, which clearly shows that he does not believe that a public reference to God is a violation of that doctrine.

While I was in America, a witness presented himself to the assizes of the county of Chester (state of New York) and declared that he did not believe in the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. The presiding officer refused to accept his oath, given, he said, that the witness had destroyed in advance all the faith that could have been put in his words. The newspapers reported the fact without commentary.<sup>23</sup>

Tocqueville cites the article that reports this incident in English as it appeared in the *New York Spectator* of August 23, 1831<sup>24</sup> not only to support his view on the importance of religion to society but also to endorse its public acknowledgment in a way that recalls Rousseau's dictum that the social contract imposes on citizens the duties of religion "as sentiments of sociability." "Without being able to oblige anyone to believe these articles, the sovereign can banish from the state anyone who does not believe them; banish him not for impiety but as an antisocial being, as one sincerely unable to love law and justice, or to sacrifice, if need be, his life to his duty."<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Tocqueville's reference to the reaction of newspapers is particularly enlightening. It makes clear that



the media far from challenging the rules of the court acquiesced in a way that amounts to its tacit agreement with the American public, which in Tocqueville's view is enlightened enough to know that religion makes possible the order commerce needs to prosper.

The important influence Tocqueville attributes to religion in fostering freedom in American society brings into question the attempt of secularists to redefine the objective of the First Amendment. Tocqueville's careful study of American democracy reminds us that historically the intent of the Establishment clause has not been to eliminate religion from public life but to promote a social environment in which religious diversity can thrive without impediment since, to paraphrase, it does not matter to society whether its religion is true. The clause's essential goal, which is to foster tolerance, then does not preempt acknowledgement of the most basic dogmas on which almost all religions agree: the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. In fact, Tocqueville's account shows that Americans widely have historically agreed that a person's credibility is closely connected to his willingness to profess these dogmas, which for him are the essential pillars upon which democratic freedom is maintained.

### **A Possible Tocquevillian Response to the Controversial Issues of Abortion and Same-sex Marriage**

As noted previously Tocqueville responded to the greater focus on rights that governs modern morality by insisting on merging the principles of the enlightenment with those of religion to establish a balance between rights and duties. His anxiety about the greater emphasis modern morality places on rights stems from his keen understanding that the foundation of virtue in democracy is very fragile insofar as it is rooted in self-interest. As shown in chapter three he is presciently aware that at some point in the

future the harmony between private and general interest he found in America may be dissolved. “But up to what extent can the two principles of individual well-being and the general good in fact be merged? How far can a conscience, which one might say was based on reflection and calculation, master those political passions which are not yet born, but which certainly will be born? That is something which only the future will show.”<sup>26</sup>

A case in point is the “civil right” issue of same-sex marriage sparked by the November 2003 decision of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court that declared the state’s ban on gay marriage unconstitutional. As the controversy prompted by this decision becomes more acrimonious it is not unreasonable to wonder whether the movement for greater civil rights, which begun in the 1960’s to correct a grave racial injustice by appealing to the moral language of the Declaration and the Protection clause of the Fourteen Amendment, has unwittingly opened the floodgates precipitating America down a sliding slope wherein private interest supersedes all consideration to the common interest. The civil rights movement was the launching pad from which radical feminism initiated the social revolution that challenged the institution of marriage<sup>27</sup> to which ironically people of the same sex now want access to legitimate their union, and called for a woman’s right to abortion. Tocqueville’s teaching reminds us that it is not enough to invoke the principle of civil rights to carry a wholesome debate on the controversial moral issues that confront us today but that our deliberation must take into account the obligations on which an ordered social life is founded.

Tocqueville helps us to talk about women and gay rights in a moral context if we contemplate them not only from the perspective of his understanding of the idea of rights

but also from that of his teaching on the system of cooperation between the sexes he maintains makes social life possible. He acknowledges that in democracy the idea of rights must be bound to self-interest to give equal citizens a stake in the political system and that if rights are to be recognized in principle each must have a particular good to defend. Thus, for him the idea of rights is necessary to the establishment of democratic order inasmuch as one is bound by the right he wants to enjoy to the duty to respect that of another and in this way private interest harmonizes with common interest. However, Tocqueville also teaches that a division of labor on the ground of sexual difference is needed for social harmony in democracy and it is actualized in the institution of marriage, which is the foundation of society. He takes pain to show that sexual equality is not synonymous with sameness and that a well-ordered social life depends on defining the separate obligations of the sexes on the basis of their natural differences. Thus, in the interest of democratic order it might be worthwhile to start a political discourse on the right claims of the sexes from the same premise as Tocqueville, i.e., the separate obligations nature has carved for each sex form the basis on which their claims to equal rights must be evaluated.

Chapter four outlined the important role Tocqueville believes woman plays in shaping morality in society by contrasting the way in which social order is affected by the different views held by the French and Americans on the equality of the sexes. Tocqueville explains the influence of woman on society by comparing American conjugal happiness to the domestic disorder that reigned in Europe to show a connection in the way in which domestic order extends to society at large. He eulogizes the American woman whose austere mores he finds have their origin in her religious beliefs

allowing her to set the moral tone of society. Woman, he states in Democracy in America, is the foundation of morality inasmuch as she rules the home and the order she establishes there affects the moral tone reflected in society.

Tocqueville insists that the harmony that reigns in domestic life affects social order irrevocably inasmuch as it is in the home that man forms the habits that rule the opinions and tastes that he takes with him to the public place. Social life is ordered in America where “the bond of marriage is most respected” because religion “reigns as sovereign over the soul of woman” enabling the American to draw “from his home the love of order, which he afterwards brings into the affairs of state.” In contrast, “[i]n Europe, almost all the disorders of society are born around the domestic hearth, not far from the nuptial bed. It is there that men conceive their scorn for natural bonds and permitted pleasures, their taste for disorder, their restiveness of heart, their instability of desires.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, unlike his American counterpart the European brings to the public sphere the disorderly passions that agitate his heart and trouble his own dwelling.

In drawing these comparisons Tocqueville not only wants to show the close connection between private and public morality but he also wants to underline that woman plays a critical role in the establishment of morality in society. American women have a positive influence on social life inasmuch as they draw from their religious beliefs the moral values that govern their irreproachable conduct whereas the licentiousness of European women has detrimental consequences for society.

The natural distinctions on which Tocqueville found the separate obligations of the sexes to foster social order point to a number of inferences from which to consider the moral issues that confront present-day America in the areas of abortion and same-sex

marriage. In the first case, if woman holds to her moral obligations, which for Tocqueville are manifested in her modesty and chastity, then the unfortunate circumstance of unwanted pregnancy does not arise to bring her to consider abortion as a choice to which she is entitled. Thus, a debate about the moral conduct of women appears to be the starting point from which to deliberate on this issue. In the second instance, if each sex has a defined social role that has its foundation in their natural abilities then to overlook the different contributions each brings into their union is to pervert nature's order, which intends that the two sexes compliment each other. On this basis, same-sex marriage is indefensible inasmuch as it subverts the natural order on which social order is founded. If Tocqueville is right that it is women who make mores because "religion is often powerless to restrain man in the midst of the innumerable temptations that fortune presents to him...but it reigns as a sovereign over the soul of women" it follows that when women's morals degenerate and men and women exchange roles it is a matter of time before society becomes utterly depraved and with social decay the light of freedom is inevitably extinguished.

To conclude, if Tocqueville's moral teaching is to have any bearing on preserving America's love of liberty in the twenty-first century it is well worth remembering his dictum that "American liberty was born in the bosom of religion." For Tocqueville, even though religion and politics are kept in separate spheres in America religion nonetheless "should be considered the first of their [Americans] political institutions; for if it does not give them the taste for freedom, it singularly facilitates their use of it."<sup>29</sup> Religion facilitates freedom because it tames the dangerous inclinations of democracy. A prominent French scholar summarizes Tocqueville's thought succinctly in

his description of the contradiction inherent in democracy that makes it dependent on religion.

Democracy wishes to fulfill nature. To do this, it takes upon itself to domesticate and subject it. Once this domestication is complete, nature will be itself and nothing but itself. This domestication will never be achieved, because nature produces inequalities. This impossibility, which reveals the contradiction in democracy, is fortunate. The moment this domestication was complete, man would be dehumanized. On the one hand democracy's project is unrealizable, because it is contrary to nature. On the other, it is impossible to stop short of this democracy and go back to aristocracy. This is because democratic equality also conforms to nature. It follows that we can only moderate democracy; we cannot stop short of democracy, because it fulfills nature. We cannot attain the end of this movement, for it would mean subjecting nature completely and dehumanizing man. We cannot escape democracy. We can never make democracy completely "real," and we must not try. We can and must moderate democracy, limit it, temper its hostility to nature, all the while benefiting from its conformity to nature. To affirm and will democracy insofar as it is in conformity with nature, to limit it insofar as it is contrary to it, such is the sovereign art on which depend the prosperity and morality of democracies.<sup>30</sup>

---

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, trans., ed., & intro., Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 2000, vol. 1, pt. 2, chap. 9, 275. See also Oeuvres II, De la démocratie en Amérique, édition publiée sous la direction d'André Jardin avec, pour ce volume, la collaboration de Jean-Claude Lamberti et James T. Schleifer, (Paris : Gallimard, 1992, vol. 1, pt. 1, chap. 9, 332. (Hereafter reference to this work will be shown as DA, vol., pt., chap. with the page number of the English translation appearing first and that of the French text second and the two separated by a slash).

<sup>2</sup> Tocqueville's analysis shows that the Church was viewed on the eve of the Revolution not merely as a close association of the old regime but as its foundation and model. Thus, in order to destroy the old regime the Revolution first had to destroy the Church. "By the very principles of its government, the Church formed an obstacle to the ideas which the intellectuals wished to see prevail in civil government. It based itself chiefly on tradition: they professed a great contempt for all institutions that were founded on respect for the past; the Church recognized an authority superior to individual reason; they appealed to nothing but the same reason. The Church was founded on a hierarchy: they aimed at the abolition of rank. For the writers to have been able to come to an understanding with the Church, both sides would have had to recognize that political society and religious society were by nature essentially different, and could not be ordered by similar principles; but we were then very far from that idea, and it seemed that, in order to attack the institutions of the state, it was necessary to destroy those of the

---

Church, which served as foundation and model for them.” Alexis de Tocqueville, The Old Regime and the Revolution, trans. Alan S. Kahan, ed., intro., and critical apparatus by François Furet and Françoise Mélonio, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), bk. 3, chap. 2, 204.

<sup>3</sup> A recent news article puts in context the *quid pro quo* that characterizes the contemporary fundamentalist-secularist debate in which each side supports its position by a partisan interpretation of the separation of church and state outlined in the U.S. Constitution. The article argues that “[q]uietly, in a crusade aimed at its evangelical base, the Bush administration is framing the election [not as a referendum on Iraq as the Democrats hope but] as a referendum on God, and ‘a mighty army of religious warriors is being assembled on the president’s behalf.’” The article goes on to describe the president’s re-election campaign strategy as one in which “thousands of ‘friendly congregations’ [are being enlisted] throughout the nation to help distribute campaign literature and register voters.” It adduces as proof for its claim a first ever White House held conference on Faith based and Community initiatives in which the president delivered a sermon about the Good Book to a cheering crowd. It also quotes the president’s faith-based czar, Jim Towey, who “told the [same] crowd that a John Kerry victory ‘could almost wind up creating a godless orthodoxy.’” It then provides the reader a comparative summary of the positions taken on this issue by each the liberal and conservative press respectively.

It offers an article in “The New Yorker” that encapsulates the liberals’ deep concerns about the fanaticism, which characterizes the Bush presidency. “For three years now, the White House has been waging a concerted campaign to tear down the wall between



---

church and state. This campaign goes far beyond Bush's 'frequent use of evangelical code words' and his loyalists' 'shocking' suggestion that 'he was chosen for his position by God himself.' Bush has used the power of the presidency to fill federal judgeships with right-wing Christian ideologues, to block stem-cell and other scientific research that doesn't mesh with fundamentalism, and to withhold billions in federal funds from family plan programs that offer such forbidden options as contraception and abortion. Those taxpayer dollars are now being funneled to faith-based groups whose primary mission is 'religious proselytization.' Under this president, the 'secular state' is under siege."

Responding to "The New Yorker" position "The Washington Times" offers the following defense for Bush's position. "Bush is merely restoring religion to its rightful place in American life. For a generation, activist judges have deliberately misread the Constitution to prohibit even the slightest reference to religion and God in a civic context. 'In public schools, for example, they tell students they can't pray even on their own time.' Valedictorians of strong Christian faith are forbidden from telling the student body about their religious beliefs. When taken to such extremes, church-state separation 'often defeats the very ideal of religious freedom it purports to uphold.' The founders envisioned a free nation where people of all faiths could openly practice their beliefs – not an America where religion, like some shameful habit, must be practiced behind closed doors." "The election: A question of faith," The Week, vol. 4, 161, June 18, 2004 19.

<sup>4</sup> On June 26, 2002, a divided three-judge panel of the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled in *Newdow vs. U.S. Congress* that the phrase "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the

---

Constitution. Michael Newdow, an atheist, filed a complaint arguing that the phrase “under God” violates his daughter’s constitutional right because she has to recite the Pledge at school. The 2-1 ruling sparked a public debate on the separation of church and state. On one side the American Center for Law and Justice criticized the ruling as erroneous while the American Civil Liberties Union praised it. Meanwhile the U.S. Senate voted 99-0 and the House of Representatives voted 416-3 to reaffirm the words “under God” in the Pledge. The Ninth Circuit challenged the constitutionality of the phrase on the basis that it was added in 1954 to differentiate the U.S. from godless communist Russia during the cold war. Eventually the case made its way to the Supreme Court, which agreed to hear arguments on the constitutionality of the Elk Grove School District’s Pledge policy on October 14, 2003 after the parties to the case filed petitions for writ of certiorari. On June 14, 2004, the Supreme Court issued a decision in which it reversed the earlier ruling by the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court. However, the Supreme Court did not rule on the constitutionality of the First Amendment but on the technicality that Mr. Newdow who is divorced from the child’s mother “lacked standing to sue her on issues related to the child’s education.” <http://pewforum.org/religion-schools/pledge/>

In August 2003 Alabama Chief Justice Ray Moore was suspended by the state’s Court of the Judiciary for placing a Ten Commandments granite monument in the state court house where he presided to acknowledge God as the source of U.S. law and liberty. On November 13, 2003 the Court of the Judiciary ordered the removal of the monument from the state court house. Judge Moore who won his judgeship by campaigning to “restore the moral foundation of law” was sued in the 1990’s during his tenure as circuit court judge by the American Civil Liberties Union for opening court sessions with prayer

---

and displaying a hand carved Ten Commandment behind his bench. The decision against Judge Moore overlooks the wish of the electorate who voted him in office. Judge Moore's activism clearly demonstrates how far conservatives are willing to go to combat secularism, which they blame for the moral bankruptcy of contemporary America. Judge Moore has a strong following of fundamentalist Christians who want to impose their views on society and he considers that "his ouster might be a springboard in his crusade for the acknowledgement of God in government."

<http://aolsvc.news.aol.com/news/article.adp?id=20031112043109990004>

Those who cherish liberty would do well to look for a middle course between secularism and fundamentalism by taking into consideration that Tocqueville's exhortation to make religion a pillar of liberty is founded on a compromise between materialism and spiritualism. For those who oppose the phrase "under God" in the Pledge and Judge Moore's attachment to religious symbolism it might be well worth to remember that although the Founding Fathers broke with the Puritans' intention to create a Christian nation they nonetheless did not intend either to create a secular state. Purdue University historian Frank Lambert in his book The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America argues that there are two extreme views about the intention of America's founders on the subject of religion and politics: the first affirms they "intended religion to be strictly a matter of private choice that should never infringe upon public life;" and the second maintains that they "intended to create an explicitly Christian nation." Neither of these views is correct. Professor Lambert makes the case that the founders at Philadelphia formulated the Establishment clause to accommodate the religious diversity of Americans who in 1789 comprised three different sects: the educated elite espoused

---

the skeptical scientific rationalism of the Enlightenment; the southern colonies practiced Anglicanism; and the common folk of the middle colonies followed a more pluralistic arrangement sparked by the religious revival of the 1740's called the First Great Awakening. A recent article, which attempts to synthesize the works of scholars on the subject of religion in America, states that "the founders never sought to drive religion from the public realm. The words they spoke, the symbols they embraced, and the rituals they established—from state-declared days of thanksgiving to prayers at the start of Congress to military chaplaincies—all made clear that even semiofficial acknowledgment of divine providence was not only acceptable but good. This public piety was distinctly non-sectarian and centered upon what might be called a benevolent theism. But as James Hutson, chief of the manuscript division of the Library of Congress, argues in his Religion and the Founding of the American Republic, whether they were old-line Calvinists or liberal deists, the Founders believed divine will legitimized their institutions and their laws and made citizens more willing to respect them. Even Thomas Jefferson, who thought most Americans would become rationalist Unitarians within a generation or two, considered the acknowledgment of providential authority essential to public virtue." Jay Tolson, "The faith of our fathers" for U.S. News & World Report, June 28, 2004 in [http://www.keepmedia.com/ShowItemDetails.do?item\\_id=493199&oliID=106](http://www.keepmedia.com/ShowItemDetails.do?item_id=493199&oliID=106)

<sup>5</sup> A NewsMax.Com article, May 24, 2004, shows that the news media is comprised of a far greater number of journalists who identify themselves as left-wing liberals than those who consider themselves conservatives according to a Pew survey. Moreover, the article reveals that there exists a "values gap between journalists and the public." For example, while sixty percent of the general public agrees "it is necessary to believe in God to be a

truly moral person,” the survey shows that “fewer than fifteen percent of those who work at news outlets believe this to be true.”

<http://www.newsmax.com/archives/ic/2004/5/24/112337.shtml>

Likewise, an article from the Boston Globe complains that news reporting is often veiled in circumlocutions intended to influence public opinion to adopt the social liberal agenda of the mainstream media on such moral issues as partial-birth or late-term abortion.

Needless to say it is problematic to have one dominant political ideology, whether liberal or conservative, that controls news reporting since the channel for healthy debate is eliminated. Moreover, since democratic opinions are disseminated in the media it is easy to see that great damage is done to public morality if indeed the press is inclined to promote a secularist agenda. Jeff Jacoby for “The Boston” Globe in *The Week*, vol. 4, 161, June 18, 2004, 14.

<sup>6</sup> An article in the Detroit News, May 23, 2004, predicts that the issue of American morality will be at the center of the 2004 presidential election. The article cites the 9/11 World Trade Center explosion, the war in Iraq and the February 4, 2004

Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court decision ordering the state legislature to rewrite the state’s marriage law within six months to benefit gay couples as possible causes giving impetus to the debate on morality that is forcing a greater commingling of religion and politics in this year’s election. The debate includes issues such as: same-sex marriage; late-term abortion; the death penalty; affirmative action; and even banning Catholic leaders like Governor Jennifer Granholm of Michigan and presidential candidate Massachusetts Senator John Kerry from communion for disagreeing with the Church’s policy against abortion. The article focuses on Michigan Catholics’ involvement in

politics because they make up a quarter of the electorate in that state and their vote is the biggest swing vote in this year's election since Michigan is one of the three Midwest states (the other two being Ohio and Pennsylvania) that will decide the outcome of the presidential election. <http://www.detnews.com/2004/politics/0405/23/a01-160992.htm>

<sup>7</sup> DA, I, 2, 9, 282/341.

<sup>8</sup> See Oeuvres II, De la démocratie en Amérique, notes et variantes, 1015-1016.

<sup>9</sup> See Roger Pilon's preface to "The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States," (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2002), 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 & 14.

<sup>11</sup> Letter from Arthur de Gobineau to Alexis de Tocqueville, September 8, 1843, in Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes : correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et d'Arthur de Gobineau, 6ème ed., ed. J. P. Mayer, intro. J. J. Chevalier, (Paris: Gallimard, 1959, tome IX, 54. (Hereafter references to this work will appear as OC IX).

<sup>12</sup> Letter to Gobineau, October 2, 1843, in *ibid.*, 59.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> DA, I, 2, 9, 286/346.

<sup>15</sup> DA, II, 1, 3, 415/529.

<sup>16</sup> Letter to Gobineau, December 20, 1853, in OC IX, 205.

<sup>17</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres complètes: correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Francisque de Corcelle. correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Madame Swetchine, édition publiée sous la direction de J. P. Mayer. Texte établi par Pierre Gibert. Soumis pour contrôle et approbation à Claude Bressollette et André Jardin, (Paris : Gallimard, 1983), 72.

---

<sup>18</sup> DA, I, 2, 9, 278/336.

<sup>19</sup> DA, I, 2, 9, 284/343.

<sup>20</sup> DA, I, 2, 9, 286/346.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> DA, I, 2, 9, 288/348.

<sup>23</sup> DA, I, 2, 9, 280/338-339.

<sup>24</sup> “The court of common pleas of Chester county (New York) a few days since rejected a witness who declared his disbelief in the existence of God. The presiding judge remarked that he had not before been aware that there was a man living who did not believe in the existence of God; that this belief constituted the sanction of all testimony in a court of justice and that he knew of no one in a Christian country where a witness had been permitted to testify without such a belief.” DA, I, 2, 9, 280/339.

<sup>25</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract, trans. & intro. Maurice Cranston, (New-York : Penguin Books, 1968), bk. 4, chap. 8, 186.

<sup>26</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Journey to America, trans. George Lawrence, ed. J. P. Mayer, (London: Faber & Faber LTD, 1959), 210-211. See also Alexis de Tocqueville, “Voyage en Amérique” in Oeuvres I, Bibliothèque de La Pléiade, édition publiée sous la direction d’André Jardin avec pour ce volume la collaboration de Françoise Mélonio et Lise Quéffelec, (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), 230-231.

<sup>27</sup> “In its initial stage, modern American feminism was not hostile to marriage; but in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a wave of radical feminism emerged that was overtly hostile to the institution of marriage itself. In their influential 1968 pamphlet “Toward a Female Liberation Movement,” for example, Beverly Jones and Judith Brown proclaimed: “The

---

married woman knows that love is, at its best, an inadequate reward for her unnecessary and bizarre heritage of oppression.” In 1969, University of Chicago sociology professor Marlene Dixon declared: “The institution of marriage is the chief vehicle for the perpetuation of the oppression of women; it is through the role of wife that the subjugation of women is maintained.

In 1970, author Robin Morgan referred to marriage as a “slavery-like practice. We can’t destroy the inequities between men and women until we destroy marriage.” In 1971, Minnesota radical feminists Helen Sullinger and Nancy Lehmann released a manifesto that declared: “Male society has sold us the idea of marriage... Now we know it is the institution that has failed us and we must work to destroy it...” In 1981, author Vivian Gornick, a tenured professor at the University of Arizona, proclaimed that “The choice to serve and be protected and plan towards being a family-maker is a choice that shouldn’t be. The heart of radical feminism is to change that.” Patrick F. Fagan, Robert E. Rector, and Lauren R. Noyes, “Why Congress Should Ignore Radical Feminist Opposition to Marriage” in The Heritage Foundation, June 16, 2003.

<http://www.heritage.org/research/family/bg1662es.cfm>

<sup>28</sup> DA, I, 2, 9, 279/336-337.

<sup>29</sup> DA, I, 2, 9, 280/338.

<sup>30</sup> Pierre Manent, Tocqueville and the Nature of Democracy, foreword Harvey C.

Mansfield, trans. John Waggoner, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1996), 81.



## Appendix A

### Note on the Texts

#### **Democracy in America**

This study uses the 1992 Pléiade edition of Tocqueville's *Oeuvres* I and II, the first of which contains an account of his voyages to Sicily, America, England (1833), England and Ireland (1835), Switzerland, Algeria (1841 & 1847), notes of a work on India (never completed), his political and academic writings while the second combines the first and second volumes of *De la démocratie en Amérique*. *Oeuvres* II is comprised of the first volume of the 13<sup>th</sup> edition and the second volume of the 12<sup>th</sup> edition, which in effect is the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the second volume since the two volumes published by Charles Gosselin were completed five years apart, the first in 1835 and the second in 1840. The 1840 publication of the second volume appeared originally in two volumes, which were reprinted again the same year. Subsequently, all publications of the *Démocratie* combined the first volume with the second volume. The 13<sup>th</sup> edition was the last one to be published in Tocqueville's lifetime. It combines the first volume with the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the second volume. Because Tocqueville did not read the proofs of the 13<sup>th</sup> edition, which contains numerous publishing errors, the Pléiade edition reproduces the second volume of the 12<sup>th</sup> edition published by Pagnère in 1848 because it was the last edition reviewed by Tocqueville.

The Pléiade edition updates the 1951 Gallimard edition of *Oeuvres, papiers et correspondances d'Alexis de Tocqueville* from which it differs in significant ways. Its most noticeable difference is its inclusion of extensive notes and analyses of Tocqueville's work. The first volume contains an introduction by André Jardin,

Tocqueville's biographer, essays by prominent French students of Tocqueville including André Jardin, Françoise Mélonio, Lise Quéffelec, and extensive explanatory notes by these scholars as well as the marginal notes found in Tocqueville's own manuscripts. The second volume contains an introduction and essay by another prominent French student of Tocqueville, Jean-Claude Lamberti, as well as notes similar to those found in the first volume.

The two volumes of *De la démocratie en Amérique* of the Gallimard edition are reproductions of the 1850 Pagnère edition, which we know Tocqueville did not review. He became gravely ill that year with the lung sickness that would cost him his life nine years later and left France for the warmer climate of Italy to cure himself and ponder his career in politics by writing his *Recollections*. However, Tocqueville made one small change to the 1850 Pagnère edition that was undoubtedly politically motivated by adding two appendices to the first volume: 1) a paper he produced on January 15, 1848 for the *Academie des Sciences Morales et Politiques* as a rebuttal to M. Cherbuliez's 1843 work titled "*De la démocratie en Suisse*" and the famous speech he gave on January 27, 1848 to the Chamber of Deputies to awaken his all too complacent colleagues from their slumber to hear the rumbling sound of the revolution that would erupt barely a month later to provoke the fall of the Guizot cabinet on February 23 and force King Louis-Philippe to abdicate on February 24. Given the importance he assigned to these two discourses, which are compiled in *Oeuvres I* of the Pléaïde edition and classified as political and academic writings, an overview of them is provided below.

The 1850 publication followed Tocqueville's retirement from political life after the October 1849 fall of Minister Barrot's cabinet in which he served as France's

Minister of Foreign Affairs. Subsequently, the Prince President Louis-Napoléon began to put in motion the wheels of his future despotic rule that culminated in the coup d'état of December 2, 1851. It is little wonder then that given these political developments, which confirmed Tocqueville's greatest fear, he found the time opportune to expand his study of democracy in that year's publication of the *Démocratie* by including in it his thoughts on the challenges it faced in the Europe of the 1850's. The first paper addresses the causes for the revolutionary nature of Switzerland's fledgling democracy and the second the abuses of the July monarchy of Louis-Philippe and their impact on public morality.

The paper on Cherbuliez's work received extensive coverage in France's major newspapers, including *La Presse*, *Le Siècle*, *Le Journal des débats*, *La Revue des Deux-Mondes*. In it Tocqueville castigates Cherbuliez who disparages democracy and blames it for Switzerland's political deficiencies. Tocqueville seeks to show that Cherbuliez's partisanship blinds him to the fact so evident to Tocqueville himself that Switzerland although a republic is not a democracy but a country in the throes of a democratic revolution. In fact, his examination of Switzerland's political institutions reveals they are far more regressive toward the liberal movement sweeping Europe than the most entrenched monarchies. Tocqueville maintains that Cherbuliez's false assumption and his nostalgia for aristocracy not only prevent him from looking for the remedies to combat democracy's excesses, as he himself had done in his work on American democracy, but also from recognizing that Switzerland's constitution has numerous flaws that exacerbate the vices inherent in democracy, including an executive branch that lacks its own power, a judiciary that is confounded with political power and a system of

confederation that increases the ineptitude generally associated with a federal government.

Likewise, the speech to the Chamber was published the day following its delivery in the French paper *Le Moniteur universel*. Tocqueville chastises the Guizot government and supplicates his colleagues to change the corruptive spirit that drives it lest all perish in the tempest he sees gathering on the horizon. He argues that the bourgeois values that permeate French political life have caused the degeneration of public and private morality. Moreover, he affirms that the abuse of influence and the surreptitious appropriation of power outside the constitution are a breeding ground for the socialist opinions taking root in the masses. He warns the government that it has brought this calamity upon itself by governing not through the appeal of opinions and sentiments directed at the common good but by appealing to the particular interest of individuals. In short, he paints for the government a vivid portrait of its corruption in order to emphasize that it risks losing its power as all men do when they are no longer worthy to hold it.

In addition to its use of the Pléiade edition of Tocqueville's works this study uses the English translation of Democracy in America by Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop. The translators have sought to remain faithful to Tocqueville's intended meaning and have succeeded very well in their quest.

### **Other Published Works**

References to Tocqueville's *L'Ancien régime et la révolution* use the text edited by G.W. Headlam and the English translation of Alan S. Kahan, which is edited by two prominent Tocqueville scholars, François Furet and Françoise Mélonio. Likewise, references to Tocqueville's *Souvenirs* use the 1893 publication by his nephew le Comte

de Tocqueville and the English translation of J. P. Mayer, another prominent Tocqueville scholar.

### **Tocqueville's Correspondence**

The works cited in this study for Tocqueville's correspondence refer to the two main editions of his complete works. The first edition published in the 1860's by Madame de Tocqueville and his friend Gustave de Beaumont was truncated in great part to protect his memory and the privacy of his correspondents, most of whom were still alive at the time of their release. In fact, Beaumont did not publish many of Tocqueville's letters until Madame de Tocqueville who survived her husband by 5 years died on December 22, 1864. This edited publication, which is generally referred to as the Beaumont edition even though Beaumont published it under Madame de Tocqueville's name, was all that was available to the public until Antoine R  dier's research early last century allowed J. P. Mayer to undertake to compile beginning in the 1950's Tocqueville's complete works (*Oeuvres compl  tes*), which contains the unedited version of his invaluable correspondence. Because the J. P. Mayer edition is the most complete edition, this study uses it mostly whenever it is possible.

For the ease and convenience of locating the texts the study cites as an additional source when necessary the letters especially selected for translation by James Toupin and Roger Boesche for their vivid portrayal of Tocqueville's political ideas. Messrs. Toupin and Boesche follow the same method as this study insofar as they also rely more heavily on the J. P. Mayer edition. It is noteworthy that after having compared some letters from the two editions they maintain nevertheless that the distortion attributed to the Beaumont

edition has occasionally been exaggerated insofar as the modifications made by him did not alter Tocqueville's basic meaning.

## Appendix B

### Article Published by Louis de Kergolay titled “*Etude Littéraire sur Alexis de Tocqueville*,” in *Le Correspondant*, April 1861<sup>1</sup>

“I lived, I could say, so close to the literary productions of Alexis de Tocqueville, I have so much assisted, in his principal works, to the intellectual progress of the creation, that my attention has perhaps been more captivated than that of another by the study of his way of doing. Thus, in speaking freely of his talent as a man of letters, as I understand it, I don’t have at all the pretension of transmitting general ideas in the matter of critic, but simply the more modest will of forming my own opinion on a certain writer in particular. I am sustained elsewhere by this conviction that in studying in depth as much as possible the literary form of an author, and after others have judged him from may be a more elevated point of view, one contributes one’s part by entering further into the man himself and into the most intimate secrets of his thoughts.

“One can say of Alexis de Tocqueville, considered from the literary point of view, that he has loved the form with as much passion as those who prefer it to the substance, and that he has nonetheless always preferred the substance to the form, for he has never taken the pen but obsessed by the ideas that he felt the need to deliver to the public. This passion of the form was already born in him before he was himself conscious of it, and it is what one sees well, if one wants to page through his first youthful essays or take a cursory view of his most intimate letters, some of which were written to his companions during his childhood.

“Those who have preferred to study the real substance of his ideas and his doctrines have signaled, as a characteristic trait of this conscientious mind, the

perseverance with which he reacts on his thought rather than tolerate something unfinished in it. One finds him, in the smallest details of his style, as faithful to this habit as in his most profound meditations...everywhere a great purity of language, an assiduous search for perfection...

“Tocqueville, like a great number of distinguished writers, puts willingly on the first plan the principal idea that he wants to bring to light; he seems to find it more simple and may be more respectful to tell you first and straight out the substance of his thought; then he explains it, justifies it, supports it with arguments or examples, develops the consequences, goes deeply into the least folds, urges you, shakes you, convinces you. The paragraph, this small composition in miniature, which must nevertheless be complete and form a whole like the more extensive compositions, is often in Tocqueville’s writings a real masterpiece...

“The beauty of his style has something inimitable; he has, if I can express myself this way, less rhetoric than any of our writers, even the most renowned...[W]e admire in Rousseau this great art of performance in which a simple idea, sound or false, sometimes very remarkable, sometimes not very new and ordinary enough, gives him sufficient material to unfold under our eyes the most magnificent spectacle, clustering admirable accessories around his principal subject and embellishing it with pompous decorations...Tocqueville develops nothing except to make himself more surely understood, or else when he feels himself invited to add some truly new notion to those he has already presented.

“Some people have tried to find a certain affinity between his style and that of Montesquieu; this comparison appears to me to rest on superficial grounds. In the



*Démocratie*, the subject is often carved into small chapters preceded by a very significant and very distinctive title to excite the curiosity of the reader; Montesquieu had given this example but the goal of the two authors is not the same. Montesquieu, who does not seem to attach a very great importance in making you catch hold of the sequence of ideas, holds above all to give spice to a subject as serious as *De l'esprit des Lois*; Tocqueville does not aim at titillating, but is attached to distinguishing as neatly as possible the different order of ideas, and seems to think that the surest way to make known the link well is to present separately each of the rings which comprises it. Montesquieu, vivacious, sparkling, Southern, full of projections, relates to you with an inexhaustible spirit his speculations on the greatest human affairs; Tocqueville, solemn, meditative, reserved, advances with the caution of a pioneer on a badly explored terrain before him, and considers only to serve as a guide to those who will not fear to tread in his following.

“I would not go as far as to say that Tocqueville never has, at anytime in his literary life, searched for in Montesquieu some models to follow. But this was only of a secondary enough manner, not very lasting, and, in my opinion, not effective. Still on the college school bench, he was particularly under the charm of La Bruyère... Later, having become a man, but still young, tackling the formidable enterprise of the *Démocratie*, he envied Montesquieu his talent to revive and to shake unceasingly the interest of the reader by the abruptness of the blows with which he strikes his attention, and he tells himself then that it would be most certainly a rare fortune to know how to steal his secret. But neither one nor the other of these two men was his principal guide in his literary career. As he approached maturity, he attached himself by preference to other masters, to none other than Pascal for the very depth of the language, to Voltaire for the ease and the

art of lightening the style. He asked above all to the one to help him to improve himself in the qualities that were his own, to the other to communicate to him something of those which he felt himself less naturally gifted. But we encounter unceasingly, in all the arts, men who have taken particularly for model this or that master, and who, after the most sustained efforts to take the most advantage of his lessons, arrive at a genre all different from his. The talent of a writer, that of an artist, is the combined product of his natural genius and the studies to which he devotes himself, two sources often so distinct, that it does not suffice to settle one's eyes on one of them to know how to predict in what way their mixture will color his works. Nothing most certainly resembles less Voltaire's genre than that of Tocqueville, and Pascal is not either the type to which one could justly compare him.

“If some comparisons should absolutely be tried, I would not venture to make them with the author of *Les Provinciales*, this writer without analogue, who, by the little antique flavor of his style, the acidity of his expression, his manner of shooting his thought off like an arrow to the heart of that of his adversary, by this inimitable mixture of grace and force, of subtlety and large reason, has remained an isolated model. But I would point out, in a more general manner, that Tocqueville belongs by certain sides to this small phalanx of writers who, with a style often very different from that of Pascal, have joined, like him, to the study of science a natural organization eminently literary, and whose style forms, in some way, the linkage between the purely scientific language and that of literary people. I find again in him, it seems to me, certain qualities proper to a few among them: a meticulous application in the exposition of the facts and the research of the details; the habit of enclosing the fruit of his works in rigorous formulas,

more real conciseness than apparent swiftness, because he never agrees to jump over the nuances and to appear to jump over great spaces by looking as though he were in a hurry; more dignity in the style than lightness and casualness, which holds may be in part to his incredible horror of vagueness and disdains for these indecisive and elegantly neglected expressions which deliver to the reader only a first pencil and leave his imagination playing itself freely around our thought.

“But it is usually an ungrateful and often dangerous task this search for dissimilarities or analogies between writers whose physiognomy is rarely comparable. Tocqueville has a very particular style that one cannot relate to any other. He is evidently a student of our great writers of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but a student who puts to a whole new use the weapon that his masters have entrusted to him: the beautiful style full of serenity of the 17<sup>th</sup> century serving to depict often bitter impressions, the language of a period of intellectual confidence diverted toward the discussion of all the social problems that torment us, of forms materially rested and where one feels that the thought is not: strange contrast, but fertile, of which he had the awareness himself and of which he has known, more than once, to draw from beauties of the first order, when he wanted, by cleverly calculated effects, to upset the soul of the reader.

“He excels above all in these beautiful effects of sadness which have a secret affinity with the state of his soul. The more we search all the details of the style of any writer, the more we are invincibly brought back to the word of Buffon: “the style is the man himself.” But next to a merit, it is not rare to meet an imperfection, so tight is often the space that separate them. Tocqueville does not know enough how to tear himself away from the preoccupations that besiege him and to come out from time to time from

his great seriousness to smile a little to the reader; he forgets too much to come to his rescue, by making him experience a few of these more happy and less grave impressions which mend the soul and do it good; and one of the reproaches that one could may be more fairly make of his style would be, if it is permitted to me to express myself this way, a lack of cheerfulness. It is a direct effect of his own organization and the natural bent of a mind usually anxious; but it is also the fault of the time in which he lived. If Tocqueville is, among our contemporaries, one of those whose weak side is the most sensitive, how many among them could we say are clearly exempt, and the absence of serenity, is it not a little the seal of everything in this century?...

“It always seemed to me that Tocqueville, in the work of composition, produced phrase by phrase; I mean to say that after having made a very general plan of a piece which occupied him, he applied himself to bring forthwith each phrase to the degree of perfection of which he was capable, before allowing himself to pass to the next phrase. This method, that I believe the least common, and which can sometime make the diction less flowing, has great consequence on the style. The creation of each phrase becomes a sort of hand-to-hand struggle between the style and the thought, which clasp each as tightly on the other...”

---

**NOTES**

<sup>1</sup>.See Annexe in QC XIII, 352-363.

## Appendix C

### A Synopsis of Tocqueville's Correspondence

Tocqueville's voluminous correspondence with, *inter alia*, Louis de Kergolay, Sophie Swetchine, Abbé Lesueur, Gustave de Beaumont, Eugène and Charles Stoffels, Pierre-Paul Royer-Collard, Jean-Jacques Ampère, Ernest de Chabrol, Claude-François (Francisque) de Corcelle, Arthur de Gobineau, and his wife Mary Motley provides a window into both his private and political views on religion, ethics and morality. The context in which he discusses these subjects varies among his correspondents. If he expresses in some letters his life long battle with metaphysical doubt he nonetheless never vacillates on his position about one's duty to lead a moral and ethical life as was exemplified by his own irreproachable conduct in public life, if not completely so in private life. In short, Tocqueville's correspondence not only reveals his noble character but it also exposes his sensitivity for the members of his intimate circle as well as the contradictions he harbored like all mortals. Since there is no other appropriate context in this study to include especially some of the letters in the last category, some of these specifically to Kergolay and Beaumont have been incorporated herein to provide a comprehensive portrayal of the man he was.

In a lecture J. P. Mayer delivered at the London School of Economics and Political Science on February 20, 1952, at the time he was directing the publication of Tocqueville's work, he attributed enough importance to his correspondence to declare that "it is by no means unlikely that his letters may be ranked even above his published works."<sup>1</sup>

Tocqueville's correspondence with his cousin and childhood friend Louis de Kergolay, his tutor Abbé Lesueur, his spiritual advisor Madame Sophie Swetchine, his friend and colleague Francisque de Corcelle and his protégé Arthur de Gobineau is particularly interesting to this study. It enables the reader to examine his most private thoughts on politics and morality for the reasons outlined below. These letters in particular have been reproduced throughout this study to support its position that Tocqueville's religious teaching is two-dimensional.

The correspondence with Abbé Lesueur and Madame Swetchine expose Tocqueville's struggle to regain his faith while one letter in particular to his friend Charles Stoffels provides a vivid description of Tocqueville's battle with doubt. Tocqueville's correspondence with Corcelle reveals his strong admonition of the vices of the Catholic Church and the great harm papal absolutism and the Church's political ambitions cause to the advancement of morality and liberty in France. This correspondence, which is examined in greater detail in chapter five, is particularly interesting because the two friends bitterly disagreed about the Church's temporal power. Their disagreement on this issue reached its nadir during Corcelle's assignment as special negotiator to Rome during the 1849 French occupation of that city. At that time Corcelle's was the subordinate of Tocqueville who was France's Minister of Foreign Affairs. His correspondence with Gobineau is also valuable because it contrasts the antithetical principles of Tocqueville's scholarship with those of his protégé and their opposed moral and political effects on society.

If Tocqueville's letters to those listed above, excepting Abbé Lesueur, reveal the thoughts and ideas that preoccupy him as *homme politique*, one finds in his letters

addressed to his wife Mary Motley and friend *le bon* Ampère, as he was fond of calling him, the mental and emotional sensitivities that were characteristic of him. His affection for and attachment to family and friends provided him great solace from the disappointments of political life as shown in his letters to them. He tirelessly assures Mary, who was often tortured and afflicted by his infidelities, that she is his best and most cherished friend and to the bachelor Ampère whose warm friendship was a salve to the isolation that followed his political retirement and confinement during his illnesses how much he appreciates and treasures his friendship. His frailty and poor health frequently cast a dark cloud upon Tocqueville. His profound love and high esteem for his wife, Mary, and deep affection for Ampère, who visited the couple for months at a time particularly after Tocqueville withdrew from public life, were effective antidotes to the black melancholia from which he suffered as a result of poor health and deep concerns for the political future of France.

The correspondence between Tocqueville and Kergolay, who has already been introduced at the very beginning of this study, is most valuable because they were united since early childhood until the end of his life by a profound, trusting and affectionate friendship that was open to the discussion of every conceivable topic of concern to them, particularly his preoccupation with questions of religion and morality. Moreover, Tocqueville never wrote anything or took any important decision without consulting his friend. It is all the more amazing that they were thus united throughout their lives given that Tocqueville's sober acceptance of democracy was antithetical to Kergolays' strong legitimist sympathies. Yet their political differences never clouded their friendship or affected the frank discussions on politics and morality they maintained throughout their



lives. Referring to the special bond they shared, Tocqueville wrote to Kergolay from New York that “one of the advantages of our friendship, is that we know each other so perfectly and we are so sure of our veracity one toward the other, that we can express to each other the beginnings of our opinions without fear of interpretations; we are well certain that the mind of the one of us who writes is perfectly in the position in which it shows itself, neither more nor less.” A few years later, in the letter in which he tells Kergolay that there are three men with whom he spends every day a little time--Pascal, Rousseau and Montesquieu—he adds “I am missing a fourth, who is you. Although our opinions differ often and on very serious points, there is in our general way of contemplating human affairs and feeling them such great analogies that your conversation always manages to awaken me and animate me. There is only you who can do that consistently...”

Kergolay and Tocqueville’s ideas on the role religion play in inculcating morality in society overlap. Tocqueville’s published works contain the development of ideas whose seeds are found in the course of the philosophical discussions the two friends carried in their life long correspondence. For example, following the publication in 1833 of *Du système pénitenciaire aux Etats-Unis et de son application en France*, which Tocqueville and Beaumont produced in collaboration, Kergolay writes to him that in the few passages he read in the papers he recognizes certain things which they had talked about previously, such as the comments on religion in the American population. Further, he adds “I found in the passages on religious feelings, ideas that pleased me because they are my own.”

Another letter provides further evidence of the intellectual bond the two friends shared. The wide acclaim with which the public received his first volume of Democracy in America prompted Tocqueville to write to Kergolay to encourage him to produce a work of his own. He expresses his confidence in Kergolay's ability, particularly because he considers him after all to be his tutor. Kergolay's inability to adapt to the social and political upheavals of his time was a cause of great concern and sadness to Tocqueville who saw him wasting his immense potential to produce great works. Responding to Tocqueville's prodding, Kergolay states: "I do not know what you want to say when you say that you believe I am your tutor; that is a crazy idea; we have so rehearsed ideas together, that there are many of which we do not know anymore the original author. Each of us has nevertheless made since he exists a certain number of good remarks and observations that the other has not made. I am often struck by this; when I re-read your book, I am all surprised of the quantity of ideas which have become clear in your eyes and are not yet at all sorted out in my own mind. If the practical life of politics should not tear you from the life of a man who searches and publishes ideas and if the material life did not constrain me either, we would become two old Greeks, like Socrates and his flock, walking in equal footsteps in order to follow each other more easily, at least in conversation ..."<sup>2</sup>

Lastly, Tocqueville's correspondence with Kergolay is valuable for providing a rare view of Tocqueville's innermost sentiments about his human failings. It is to Kergolay, who often played the difficult role of conciliator in his marriage, that he confesses his inability to remain faithful to his wife despite his love for her. His

infidelity was a source of great moral conflict for him, which he expresses in a letter, September 27, 1843, to his friend dated.

“I found Marie in a state of exasperation genuinely despairing. What more than anything tore my heart was to see that the excessive agitation of her mind was finally affecting her physical health. She ate little, slept poorly and was getting thinner before my eyes. This spectacle filled me with a pain that you understand better than I would be able to tell you... For my part, I feel still, I will confess to you, a depth of moral aching accompanied by sadness and anxiety. It is very evident that there is something in me that cannot satisfy Marie and that she ties all her happiness to a sole condition that I cannot provide her except by changing myself from top to bottom, difficult undertaking. I love her with an ardor that goes as far as passion. She has my trust without reserve; I desire her happiness and I work at it unceasingly as much as it is in me to do so. She is for me that which every woman, I think, have ever been to a man: the first condition not only of happiness, but of tranquility, of effort in everything, almost of life, and all that is not enough for her. She would like not only to rule habitually over my senses; but to captivate, suppress them so to speak. If she does not have that, she has nothing. The least divergence on my part appears to her the last and most horrible of misfortunes. There is no hope of making her hear reason on this point. Time in advancing seems to make her more and more irritable on this chapter of which previously she spoke with much less intensity. This darkens terribly the only side of a future which for a long time I considered with happiness and gratitude. I see myself definitively placed in this alternative or to drive to despair and may be to strike as far as her life the being who is most precious to me in this world and in whom I sum up for myself all ideas of genuine

happiness; or to tame for ever and to destroy an instinct that too many experiences have taught me naturally excite itself from time to time as far as blindness and a kind of madness. How will I manage to stop this kind of boiling of the blood that the approach of a woman no matter who she is causes me still, as twenty years ago?... Assuredly, nothing shows me better than what is happening to us, if that needs to be shown, to what extent happiness is elusive in this world and the human condition a miserable thing. Here all the conditions for being happy are found but one and that one is enough to cancel all the others...”<sup>3</sup>

Tocqueville’s relationship with Beaumont began later in life but it was equally important to him insofar as they shared similar interests and ambitions, which they both realized with long political careers in the Chamber of Deputies and as members of the Constituent Assembly in 1848 to write a new constitution for France. They also traveled together to America in 1831 where Beaumont nursed Tocqueville through a serious illness in Tennessee and to Algeria in 1841 where he also nursed him through another illness at Camp Edis. He met Beaumont in 1827 when he was appointed *juge auditeur* at the law court of Versailles where Beaumont served as deputy public prosecutor since 1826. The similarity of their background and contrasting personalities drew them to each other and they formed a bond that lasted the rest of their lives except for the incident outlined below.

The correspondence with Beaumont reveals Tocqueville’s deepest emotions about the unwavering loyalty he associated with friendship. This is most evident in the exchange of letters that record the pain Tocqueville suffered during his quarrel and disagreement with Beaumont about an unfortunate misunderstanding over their

collaboration in launching an opposition newspaper that momentarily erupted into political war between them and cooled their friendship between 1844 and 1848.

In Tocqueville's France where newspapers were identified by their affiliation with political parties, Tocqueville and Beaumont were writing for different journals during the summer of 1844 and the Spring of 1845 when Tocqueville took over an opposition newspaper *Le Commerce* while Beaumont who intended to join him eventually was still honoring a commitment he had made to another journal, *Le Siècle*. These two papers took different positions on the issue of the day-- the right of the Catholic Church to establish educational institutions that could compete with state-approved institutions and the right to do so without state interference. This development put French liberals who had historically quarreled with the Church in an awkward position especially because the Catholic party was demanding political change based on liberal principles. *Le Siècle* took an anticlerical position while in *Le Commerce* Tocqueville supported a moderate position not because he supported the Catholic party but because he did not advocate state monopoly of education. Tocqueville's honor and reputation as a progressive liberal was compromised in the course of the dispute that was aired in the newspapers and he felt horribly betrayed by Beaumont. He writes the following to him on December 9, 1844.

"I did not want to write you these last three days. I feared that the liveliness of my sentiments exceeded by far the reality of the facts. It is essential, however, that I do so today, because I fear you might misunderstand the cause of my silence. You have, very involuntarily no doubt, distressed me and wronged me as, perhaps in all the world, you alone were capable of doing. I have one vulnerable point. My birth and the opinions of my family [who are all legitimists] can lead people to believe that I am attached to the

legitimists and to the clergy, and, as I have not married, as you have, a granddaughter of General Lafayette, this point of departure must naturally lead my enemies to attack unceasingly, not only my actions, but my intentions, not only my conduct, but my honor. At the first prick that their self-esteem receives, they do not fail to attack in this way, and the day after the one on which they waged this cowardly and disloyal war on me, you publicly separate yourself from me on the question that divides us. I am not reproaching you for that, I was expecting it. But you are leaving me alone without shielding me. Did you need the attacks of *Le Siècle* in order to know how my conduct would be interpreted by our common adversaries? Not only that but you declare to them that they have your complete sympathy. Your friendship for me prevents you, it is true, from associating yourself with the war that is being waged against me ... God is my witness that I do not hold it against you, but you have caused me great sorrow. I would have preferred that you had abandoned me in the virgin forest or in the camp at Eddis, [referring to Beaumont's care during his illnesses] instead of acting then toward me as a brother."

It is a tribute to the character of both men that they not only overcame their disappointment with one another over this misunderstanding but resumed again their warm friendship. Nothing attests more to this than the fact that it was to Beaumont that Tocqueville wrote his last letter pleading him to come to Cannes on March 4, 1859, shortly a month before he died on April 16 of the same year. "My dear friend, I know nothing that has ever grieved me so much as what I am going to say to you: I ask you to come... What can I say to you, my friend, if not this: COME. COME, as fast as you can. You alone can put us back on the field. Your cheerfulness, your courage, your liveliness, the complete knowledge you have of us and of our affairs, would make easy for you what

would be impracticable for someone else. Come. I know what I am asking you is an immense proof of friendship. I know it; but I know to whom I am addressing myself... Let me treat you like a brother; have you not been a thousand times more in a thousand situations! ...Do not answer. Come. Do not be vexed with the man who is imposing such a cruel tax on you; but think rather of the unfortunate man, of the friend of more than thirty years, who fears all sorts of misfortunes, if you do not come to his aid...Come. May Madame de Beaumont pardon us or rather I am sure she has already pardoned us. I embrace you from the depth of my soul.”<sup>4</sup>

---

**NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> J. P. Mayer, "Tocqueville as a Political Sociologist," Political Studies I, (1953): 135.

<sup>2</sup> See Letters to Louis de Kergolay, 29 June 1831, November 10, 1836, January 8, 1833, September 4, 1837 respectively and letter from Kergolay to Tocqueville, September 30, 1837, in OC XIII, 13, 225, 418, 310, 472, 477.

<sup>3</sup> See OC XIII, 120-122.

<sup>4</sup> See Alexis de Tocqueville, Selected Letters on Politics and Society, ed. Roger Boesche, trans. James Toupin and Roger Boesche, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1985, 168-171 & 377-378.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### *Tocqueville's Works*

Tocqueville, Alexis de. Democracy in America. Translated by Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000.

\_\_\_\_\_. Egalite sociale et liberté politique. Textes choisis et présentés par Pierre Gibert. Préface de René Rémond. Paris: Editions Aubier-Montaigne, 1977.

\_\_\_\_\_. Journey to America. Translated by George Lawrence. Edited by J. P. Mayer. London: Faber And Faber LTD, 1959.

\_\_\_\_\_. L'Ancien régime. Edited by G. W. Headlam, B.A. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.

\_\_\_\_\_. Memoir on Pauperism. Translated by Seymour Drescher. Introduction by Gertrude Himmelfarb. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997.

\_\_\_\_\_. Oeuvres I. Voyages. Edition publiée sous la direction d'André Jardin avec, pour ce volume, la collaboration de Françoise Mélonio et Lise Quéffelec. Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. Editions Gallimard, 1992.

\_\_\_\_\_. Oeuvres II. De la démocratie en Amérique I et II. Edition publiée sous la direction d'André Jardin avec, pour ce volume, la collaboration de Jean-Claude Lamberti et James T. Schleifer. Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. Editions Gallimard, 1992.

\_\_\_\_\_. Oeuvres complètes. Tome II. L'Ancien régime et la révolution. Edition définitive publiée sous la direction de J. P. Mayer. Introduction par Georges Lefèbvre. Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1952. Vol. 1.

\_\_\_\_\_. Oeuvres complètes. Tome II. L'Ancien régime et la révolution. Fragments et notes inédites sur la révolution. Edition définitive publiée sous la direction de J. P. Mayer. Texte établi et annoté par André Jardin.. Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1953. Vol. 2.

\_\_\_\_\_. Oeuvres complètes d'Alexis de Tocqueville: correspondance et oeuvres posthumes. Tome V. Publiées par Madame de Tocqueville. Paris: Michel Levy Frères, Libraires Editeurs, 1866

\_\_\_\_\_. Oeuvres complètes. Tome VI. Correspondance anglaise: correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville avec Henry Reeve et John Stuart Mill. Edition définitive publiée sous la direction de J. P. Mayer. Texte établi et annoté par J.-P. Mayer et Gustave Rudler. Introduction par J. P. Mayer. Paris: Gallimard, 1954.

- 
- . Oeuvres complètes. Tome VII. Correspondance étrangère d'Alexis de Tocqueville. Amérique, Europe Continentale. Edition publiée sous la direction de J. P. Mayer. Volume établi par Françoise Mélonio, Lise Quéffelec et Anthony Pleasance. Soumis pour contrôle et approbation à Jean-Claude Lamberti et à David Lee. Paris: Gallimard, 1986.
- 
- . Oeuvres complètes. Tome VIII. Correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Gustave de Beaumont. Edition définitive publiée sous la direction de J. P. Mayer. Texte établi, annoté et prefacé par André Jardin. Paris: Gallimard, 1967.
- 
- . Oeuvres complètes. Tome IX. Correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et d'Arthur de Gobineau. Edition définitive publiée sous la direction de J. P. Mayer. Texte établi et annoté par M. Degros. Introduction par Jean-Jacques Chevalier. Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1959.
- 
- . Oeuvres complètes. Tome X. Correspondance et écrits locaux. Edition publiée sous la direction de J. P. Mayer. Volume établi par Lise Quéffelec-Dumasy. Prefacé par André-Jean Tudesq et soumis pour contrôle et approbation à Louis Girard et à Yves Nedelec. Paris: Gallimard, 1995.
- 
- . Oeuvres complètes. Tome XI. Correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Pierre-Paul Royer-Collard: Correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Jean-Jacques Ampère. Edition définitive publiée sous la direction de J. P. Mayer. Texte établi, annoté et prefacé par André Jardin. Paris: Gallimard, 1970.
- 
- . Oeuvres complètes. Tome XIII. Correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Louis de Kergolay. Edition définitive publiée sous la direction de J. P. Mayer. Texte établi par André Jardin. Introduction et notes par Jean-Alain Lesourd. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1977.
- 
- . Oeuvres complètes. Tome XIV. Correspondance familiale. Texte établi par André Jardin et annoté par Jean-Louis Benoit et André Jardin. Prefacé par Jean-Louis Benoit et soumis pour contrôle et approbation à Jean-Claude Casanova et à Michelle Perrot. Paris: Gallimard, 1998.
- 
- . Oeuvres complètes. Tome XV. Correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Francisque de Corcelle. Correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Madame Swetchine. Edition publiée sous la direction de J. P. Mayer. Texte établi par Pierre Gibert. Soumis pour contrôle et approbation à Claude Bressolette et à André Jardin. Paris: Gallimard, 1983.
- 
- . Oeuvres complètes. Tome XVI. Mélanges. Edition publiée sous la direction de J. P. Mayer. Volume établi par Françoise Mélonio. Soumis pour contrôle et approbation à Jean-Claude Casanova et à Pierre Rosanvallon. Paris: Gallimard, 1989.

\_\_\_\_\_. Oeuvres complètes. Tome XVIII. Correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville avec Adolphe de Circourt et avec Madame de Circourt. Edition publiée sous la direction de J. P. Mayer. Volume établi par A. P. Kerr. Soumis pour contrôle et approbation à Louis Girard et à Douglas Johnson. Paris: Gallimard, 1983.

\_\_\_\_\_. Selected Letters On Politics And Society. Edited by Roger Boesche. Translated by James Toupin and Roger Boesche. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985.

\_\_\_\_\_. Souvenirs de Alexis de Tocqueville. Publiés par le Comte de Tocqueville. Paris: Calmann Levy (Ancienne Maison Michel Levy Frères), 1893.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The European Revolution" & Correspondence with Gobineau. Introduced, edited and translated by John Lukacs. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1959.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Old Regime and the Revolution. Edited by François Furet and Françoise Mélonio. Translated by Alan S. Kahan. Vol. 1: The complete Text. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Recollections of Alexis de Tocqueville. Translated by Alexander Teixeira de Mattos. Edited by J.-P. Mayer. London: The Harvill Press, 1948.

\_\_\_\_\_. Writings on Empire and Slavery. Edited and Translated by Jennifer Pitts. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

### ***Other Sources***

Armour, Leslie. "Infini Rien" Pascal's Wager and the Human Paradox. Published for the Journal of the History of Philosophy, Inc. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993.

Beaumont, Gustave de. Marie ou l'esclavage aux Etats-Unis: tableaux de mœurs américaines. Paris: Librairie de Charles Gosselin, 1835.

Boesche, Roger. The Strange Liberalism of Alexis de Tocqueville. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.

Byron, George Gordon, Baron. Childe Harold's Pilgrimage and Other Romantic Poems. Edited by Samuel C. Chew. New York: Odyssey Press, 1936.

Chateaubriand, Auguste Francois-René, Vicomte de. Atala, René, Le dernier abencerage. Introduction par Emile Faguet. Paris : Nelson Editeurs, 1939.

- \_\_\_\_\_. Essai sur les révolutions. Génie du Christianisme. Texte établi, présenté et annoté par Maurice Regard. Paris : Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. Editions Gallimard, 1978.
- Dolan, John P. History of the Reformation, A Conciliatory Assessment of Opposite Views. Introduction by Jaroslav Pelikan. New-York and Toronto: The New American Library, 1965.
- Drescher, Seymour, Tocqueville and England. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964.
- Duby, Georges, ed. Histoire de la France. Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1970.
- Dworkin, Ronald W. The Rise of the Imperial Self: America's Culture Wars in Augustinian Perspective. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1996.
- Faguet, Emile. Politiques et moralistes du dix-neuvieme siècle. Premiere série. Paris: Société Française d'Imprimerie et de Librairie.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Politiques et moralistes du dix-neuvieme siècle. Deuxieme série. Paris: Société Française d'Imprimerie et de Librairie.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Politiques et moralistes du dix-neuvieme siècle. Troisieme série. Paris: Société Française d'Imprimerie et de Librairie.
- Flaubert, Gustave. Sentimental Education or The History Of A Young Man. New-York and London: M. Walter Dunne, 1904.
- Frohen, Bruce. Virtue and the Promise of Conservatism, The Legacy of Burke and Tocqueville. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993.
- Goldstein, Doris S. Trial of Faith, Religion and Politics in Tocqueville's Thought. New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, Inc., 1975.
- Goubert, Pierre. The Course of French History. Translated by Maarten Ultee. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Jardin, André. Tocqueville, A Biography. Translated by Lydia Davis with Robert Hemenway. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1988.
- Jordan, Jeff, ed. Gambling on God, Essays on Pascal's Wager. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1994.
- Kessler, Sanford. Tocqueville's Civil Religion, American Christianity and the Prospects for Freedom. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

- Kojève, Alexandre. Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit. Assembled by Raymond Queneau. Edited by Allan Bloom. Translated by James H. Nichols, Jr. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969.
- Kolakowski, Leszek. God Owes Us Nothing, A Brief Remark on Pascal's Religion and on the Spirit of Jansenism. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Koritansky, John C. Alexis de Tocqueville and the New Science of Politics: An Interpretation of Democracy in America. Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1986.
- Lamartine, Alphonse Marie Louis, Marquis de. Oeuvres poétiques complètes. Texte établi, annoté et présenté par Marius-Francois Guyard. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. Paris : Editions Gallimard, 1963.
- Lamberti, Jean-Claude. Tocqueville and the Two Democracies. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Lawler, Peter Augustine. The Restless Mind, Alexis de Tocqueville on the Origin and Perpetuation of Human Liberty. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1993.
- Lawlor, Mary, S.N.D. Alexis de Tocqueville in the Chamber of Deputies: His Views On Foreign and Colonial Policy. Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1959.
- Lively, Jack. The Social and Political Thought of Alexis de Tocqueville. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.
- Mancini, Matthew. Alexis de Tocqueville. New York: Twaine Publishers, 1994.
- Manent, Pierre. Tocqueville and the Nature of Democracy. Foreword by Harvey C. Mansfield. Translated by John Waggoner. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1996.
- Mather, Cotton. Magnalia Christi Americana. Edited by Kenneth B. Murdock with the Assistance of Elizabeth W. Miller. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977.
- Mayer, J. P. Alexis de Tocqueville. Paris: Gallimard, 1948.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Alexis de Tocqueville, A Biographical Study in Political Science. Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1966.
- Mélonio, Françoise. Tocqueville and the French. Translated by Beth G. Raps.

Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998.

Mesnard, Jean. Pascal. Translated by Claude and Marcia Abraham. University: University of Alabama Press, 1965.

Montesquieu, Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron de. Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline. Translated by David Lowenthal. London: Collier-MacMillan Limited, 1965.

\_\_\_\_\_. Oeuvres complètes. Préface de Georges Vedel. Présentation et notes de Daniel Oster. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1964.

\_\_\_\_\_. Persian Letters. Translated by C. J. Betts. New York: Penguin Books, 1973.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Spirit of the Laws. Translated and Edited by Anne Cohler, Basia Miller and Harold Stone. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Pascal, Blaise. Oeuvres complètes. Texte établi et annoté par Jacques Chevalier. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1954.

\_\_\_\_\_. Pensées. Texte de l'édition Brunschvicg. Edition précédée de la vie de Pascal par Mme Périer, sa soeur. Introduction et notes par Ch.-M. des Granges. Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1964.

Pierson, George Wilson. Tocqueville in America. Abridged by Dudley C. Lunt from Tocqueville and Beaumont in America. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959.

Rédier, Antoine. Comme disait Monsieur de Tocqueville. Paris: Librairie académique Perrin Et Cie, Libraires-Editeurs, 1925.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. Emile or On Education. Introduction, Translation and Notes by Allan Bloom. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1979.

\_\_\_\_\_. Julie ou La Nouvelle Heloise: Lettres de deux amants habitants d'une petite ville au pied des Alpes. Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1952.

\_\_\_\_\_. The First and Second Discourses. Edited by Roger D. Masters. Translated by Roger D. and Judith R. Masters. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Social Contract. Translated and introduced by Maurice Cranston. New York: Penguin Books, 1968.

Shiner, L. E. The Secret Mirror, Literary Form and History in Tocqueville's Recollections. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.

Terchek, Ronald and Conte, Thomas C. Theories of Democracy: A Reader. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001.

Trevelyan, G. M. A Shortened History of England. London: Penguin Books, 1942.

Waterman, Mina. Voltaire, Pascal and Human Destiny. New York: Octagon Books, 1971.

Zetterbaum, Marvin. Tocqueville and the Problem of Democracy. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967.